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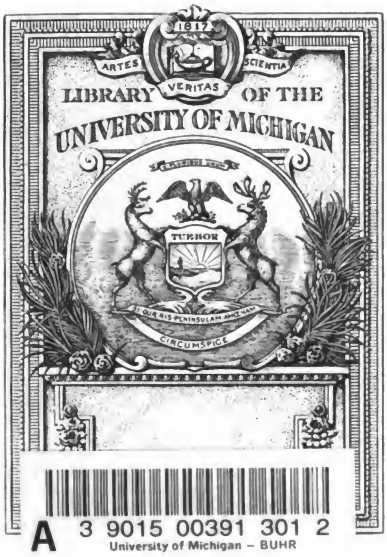

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AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE AND IMMUTABILITY OF TRUTH, IN OPPOSITION TO SOPHISTRY AND SCEPTICISM.

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Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapientia dicit.

JUVENAL.

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INTRODUCTION.

TO thoſe who love learning and mankind, and who are more ambitious to diſtinguiſh themſelves as men, than as diſputants, it is matter of humiliation and regret, that names and things have ſo oft been miſtaken for each other; that ſo much of the philoſopher's time muſt be employed in aſcertaining the ſignification of words; and that ſo many doctrines, of high reputation, and of ancient date, when traced to their firſt principles, have been found to terminate in verbal ambiguity. If I have any knowledge of my own heart, or of the ſubject I propoſe to examine, I may venture to aſſure the reader, that it is no part of the deſign of this book, to encourage verbal diſputation. On the contrary, it is my ſincere purpoſe to avoid, and to do every thing in my power to check it; convinced as I am, that it never can do any good, and

that it has been the cauſe of much evil, both in philoſophy and in common life. And I hope I have a fairer chance to eſcape it, than ſome who have gone before me in this part of ſcience. I aim at no paradoxes; my prejudices (if certain inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of the underſtanding may be ſo called) are all in favour of truth and virtue; and I have no principles to ſupport, but thoſe which ſeem to me to have influenced the judgment of a great majority of mankind in all ages of the world.

Some readers may think, that there is but little merit in this declaration; it being as much for my own credit, as for the intereſt of mankind, that I guard againſt a practice, which is acknowledged to be always unprofitable, and generally pernicious. A verbal diſputant! what claim can he have to the title of Philoſopher! what has he to do with the laws of nature, with the obſervation of facts, with life and manners! Let him not intrude upon the company of men of ſcience; but repoſe with his brethren Aquinas and Suarez, in the corner of ſome Gothic cloiſter, dark as his underſtanding, and cold as his heart. Men are now become too judicious to be amuſed with words, and too *firm-minded* to be confuted

futed with quibbles.—Many of my contemporaries would readily join in this apoſtrophe, who yet are themſelves the dupes of the moſt egregious dealers in logomachy that ever perverted the faculty of ſpeech. In fact, from ſome inſtances that have occurred to my own obſervation, I have reaſon to believe, that verbal controverſy has not always, even in this age, been accounted a contemptible thing: and the reader, when he comes to be better acquainted with my ſentiments, will perhaps think the foregoing declaration more diſintereſted than at firſt ſight it may appear.

They who form opinions concerning the manners and principles of the times, may be divided into three claſſes. Some will tell us, that the preſent age tranſcends all that have gone before it, in politeneſs, learning, and good ſenſe; will thank Providence (or their ſtars) that their lot of life has been caſt in ſo glorious a period; and wonder how men could ſupport exiſtence amidſt the ignorance and barbariſm of former days. By others we are accounted a generation of triflers and profligates; ſciolifts in learning, hypocrites in virtue, and formaliſts in good-breeding; wiſe only when

when we follow the ancients, and fooliſh whenever we deviate from them. Sentiments ſo violent are generally wrong: and therefore I am diſpoſed to adopt the notions of thoſe who may be conſidered as forming an intermediate claſs; who, though not blind to the follies, are yet willing to acknowledge the virtues, both of paſt ages, and of the preſent. And ſurely, in every age, and in every man, there is ſomething to praiſe, as well as ſomething to blame.

When I ſurvey the philoſophy of the preſent age, I find much matter of applauſe and admiration. Mathematics, Natural Philoſophy, and Natural Hiſtory, in all their branches, have riſen to a pitch of perfection, that does ſignal honour to human capacity, and far ſurpaſſes what the moſt ſanguine projectors of former times had any reaſon to look for: and the paths to further improvement in thoſe ſciences are ſo clearly marked out, that nothing but honeſty and attention ſeems requiſite to enſure the ſucceſs of future adventurers. Moral Philoſophy and Logic have not been ſo fortunate. Yet, even here, we have happily got rid of much pedantry and jargon; our ſyſtems have more the appearance of liberal ſentiments, good taſte, and

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correct compoſition, than thoſe of the ſchoolmen; we diſclaim (at leaſt in words) all attachment to hypotheſis and party; profeſs to ſtudy men and things, as well as books and words; and aſſert, with the utmoſt vehemence of proteſtation, our love of truth, of candour, and of ſound philoſophy. But let us not be deceived by appearances. Neither Moral Philoſophy, nor the kindred ſciences of Logic and Criticiſm, are at preſent upon the moſt deſirable footing. The rage of paradox and ſyſtem has transformed them (although of all ſciences theſe ought to be the ſimpleſt and the cleareſt) into a maſs of confuſion, darkneſs, and abſurdity. One kind of jargon is laid aſide; but another has been adopted, more faſhionable indeed, but not leſs frivolous. Hypotheſis, though verbally diſclaimed, is really adhered to with as much obſtinacy as ever. Words have been defined; but their meaning ſtill remains indefinite. Appeals have been made to experience; but with ſuch miſrepreſentation of fact, and in ſuch equivocal language, as plainly ſhew the authors to have been more concerned for their theory, than for the truth. All ſciences, and eſpecially Moral Philoſophy, ought to regulate human practice: practice is regulated by principles, and all principles ſuppoſe conviction;

viction: yet the aim of our moſt celebrated moral ſyſtems is, to diveſt the mind of every principle, and of all conviction; and, conſequently, to diſqualify man for action, and to render him as uſeleſs, and as wretched, as poſſible. In a word, SCEPTICISM is now the profeſſion of every faſhionable inquirer into human nature; a ſcepticiſm which is not confined to points of mere ſpeculation, but has been extended to practical truths of the higheſt importance, even to the principles of morality and religion. Proofs of all theſe aſſertions will appear in the ſequel.

I ſaid, that my prejudices are all in favour of truth and virtue. To avow any ſort of prejudice, may perhaps ſtartle ſome readers. If it ſhould, I muſt here intreat all ſuch to pauſe a moment, and aſk of their own hearts theſe ſimple queſtions.—Are virtue and truth uſeful to mankind? Are they matters of indifference? Or are they pernicious?—If any one finds himſelf diſpoſed to think them pernicious, or matters of indifference, I would adviſe him to lay my book aſide; for it does not contain one ſentiment in which he can be intereſted; nor one expreſſion with which he can be pleaſed. But he who believes that virtue

and

and truth are of the higheſt importance, that in them is laid the foundation of human happineſs, and that on them depends the very exiſtence of human ſociety, and of human creatures,——that perſon and I are of the ſame mind; I have no prejudices that he would wiſh me not to have: he may proceed; and I hope he will proceed with pleaſure, and encourage, by his approbation, this honeſt attempt to vindicate truth and virtue; and to overturn that pretended philoſophy which ſuppoſes, or which may lead us to ſuppoſe, every dictate of conſcience, every impulſe of underſtanding, and every information of ſenſe, queſtionable and ambiguous.

This ſceptical philoſophy (as it is called) ſeems to me to be dangerous, not becauſe it is ingenious, but becauſe it is ſubtle and obſcure. Were it rightly underſtood, no confutation would be neceſſary; for it does, in fact, confute itſelf, as I hope to demonſtrate. But many, to my certain knowledge, have read it, and admitted its tenets, who do not underſtand the grounds of them; and many more, ſwayed by the faſhion of the times, have greedily adopted its concluſions, without any knowledge of the

the premiſes, or any concern about them. An attempt therefore to expoſe this pretended philoſophy to public view, in its proper colours, will not, I hope, be cenſured as impertinent by any whoſe opinion I value: if it ſhould, I ſhall be ſatisfied with the approbation of my own conſcience, which will never reproach me for intending to do good.

I am ſorry, that in the courſe of this inquiry, it will not always be in my power to ſpeak of ſome celebrated names with that deference, to which ſuperior talents, and ſuperior virtue, are always entitled. Every friend to civil and religious liberty, every lover of mankind, every admirer of ſincerity and ſimple manners, every heart that warms at the recollection of diſtinguiſhed virtue, muſt conſider LOCKE as one of the moſt amiable, and moſt illuſtrious men, that ever our nation produced. Such he is, ſuch he will ever be, in my eſtimation. The parts of his philoſophy to which truth obliges me to object, are but few, and, compared with the extent and importance of his other writings, extremely inconſiderable. I object to them, becauſe I think them erroneous and dangerous; and I am convinced, that

that their author, if he had lived to ſee the inferences that have been drawn from them, would have been the firſt to declare them abſurd, and would have expunged them from his works with indignation.— BERKELEY was equally amiable in his life, and equally a friend to truth and virtue. In elegance of compoſition he was perhaps ſuperior. I admire his virtues: I can never ſufficiently applaud his zeal in the cauſe of religion: but ſome of his reaſonings on the ſubject of human nature I cannot admit, without renouncing my claim to rationality.— There is a writer now alive, of whoſe philoſophy I have much to ſay. By his philoſophy, I mean the ſentiments he has publiſhed in a book called, *A Treatiſe of Human Nature*, in three volumes, printed in the year 1739; the principal and moſt dangerous doctrines of which he has ſince republiſhed again and again, under the title of, *Eſſays Moral and Political*, &c. Of his other works I ſay nothing; nor have I at preſent any concern with them. Virgil is ſaid to have been a bad proſe-writer; Cicero was certainly a bad poet: and this author, though not much acquainted with human nature, and therefore not well qualified to write a treatiſe upon it, may yet be an excellent politician,

tician, financier, and hiſtorian. His merit in theſe three reſpects is indeed generally allowed: and if my ſuffrage could add any thing to the luſtre of his reputation, I ſhould here, with great ſincerity and pleaſure, join my voice to that of the public, and make ſuch an encomium on the author of *the Hiſtory of England* as would not offend any of his rational admirers. But why is this author's character ſo replete with inconſiſtency! why ſhould his principles and his talents extort at once our eſteem and deteſtation, our applauſe and contempt! That he, whoſe manners in private life are ſaid to be ſo agreeable to many of his acquaintance, ſhould yet, in the public capacity of an author, have given ſo much cauſe of juſt offence to all the friends of virtue and mankind, is to me matter of aſtoniſhment and ſorrow, as well as of indignation. That he, who ſucceeds ſo well in deſcribing the fates of nations, ſhould yet have failed ſo egregiouſly in explaining the operations of the mind, is one of thoſe incongruities in human genius, for which perhaps philoſophy will never be able fully to account. That he, who has ſo impartially ſtated the oppoſite pleas and principles of our political factions, ſhould yet have adopted

adopted the moſt illiberal prejudices againſt natural and revealed religion: that he, who on ſome occaſions has diſplayed even a profound erudition, ſhould at other times, when intoxicated with a favorite theory, have ſuffered affirmations to eſcape him, which would have fixed the opprobrious name of Scioliſt on a leſs celebrated author: and finally, that a moral philoſopher, who ſeems to have exerted his utmoſt ingenuity in ſearching after paradoxes, ſhould yet happen to light on none, but ſuch as are all, without exception, on the ſide of licentiouſneſs and ſcepticiſm:— theſe are inconſiſtencies perhaps equally inexplicable; at leaſt they are ſuch as I do not at preſent chuſe to explain. And yet, that this author is chargeable with all theſe inconſiſtencies, will not, I think, be denied by any perſon of ſenſe and candour, who has read his writings with attention. His philoſophy has done great harm. Its admirers, I know, are very numerous; but I have not as yet met with one perſon, who both admired and underſtood it. We are prone to believe what we wiſh to be true: and moſt of this author's philoſophical tenets are ſo well adapted to what I fear I may call the faſhionable

ſhionable notions of the times, that thoſe who are ambitious to conform to the latter, will hardly be diſpoſed to examine ſcrupulouſly the evidence of the former.--- Having made this declaration, which I do in the ſpirit of an honeſt man, I muſt take the liberty to treat this author with that plainneſs, which the cauſe of truth, the intereſts of ſociety, and my own conſcience, require. The ſame candour that prompts me to praiſe, will alſo oblige me to blame. The inconſiſtency is not in me, but in him. Had I done but half as much as he, in labouring to ſubvert principles which ought ever to be held ſacred, I know not whether the friends of truth would have granted me any indulgence; I am ſure they ought not. Let me be treated with the lenity due to a good citizen, no longer than I act as becomes one.

If it ſhall be acknowledged by the candid and intelligent reader, that I have in this book contributed ſomething to the eſtabliſhment of old truths, I ſhall not be much offended, though others ſhould pretend to diſcover, that I have advanced nothing new. Indeed I would not wiſh to ſay any thing on theſe ſubjects, that has not often occurred to the common ſenſe of mankind. In Logic and

and Morals, we may have new treatiſes, and new theories; but we are not now to expect new diſcoveries. The principles of moral duty have long been underſtood in theſe enlightened parts of the world; and mankind, in the time that is paſt, have had more truth under their conſideration, than they will probably have in the time to come. Yet he who makes theſe ſciences the ſtudy of his life, may perhaps collect particulars concerning their evidence, which though known to a few, are unknown to many; may ſet ſome principles in a more ſtriking light than that in which they have been formerly viewed; may deviſe methods of confuting new errors, and expoſing new paradoxes; and may hit upon a more popular way of diſplaying what has hitherto been exhibited in too dark and myſterious a form.

It is commonly allowed, that the ſcience of human nature is of all human ſciences the moſt curious and important. To know ourſelves, is a precept which the wiſe in all ages have recommended, and which is enjoined by the authority of revelation itſelf. Can any thing be of more conſequence to man, than to know what is his duty, and how he may arrive at happineſs? It is from the exa-

examination of his own heart that he receives the firſt intimations of the one, and the only ſure criterion of the other.---What can be more uſeful, more delightful, and more ſublime, than to contemplate the Deity? It is in the works of nature, particularly in the conſtitution of the human ſoul, that we diſcern the firſt and moſt conſpicuous traces of the Almighty; for without ſome previous acquaintance with our own moral nature, we could not have any certain knowledge of His.---Deſtitute of the hope of immortality, and a future retribution, how contemptible, how miſerable is man! And yet, did not our moral feelings, in concert with what reaſon diſcovers of the Deity, evidence the neceſſity of a future ſtate, in vain ſhould we pretend to judge rationally of that revelation by which life and immortality have been brought to light.

How then is this ſcience to be learned? In what manner are we to ſtudy human nature? Doubtleſs by examining our own hearts and feelings, and by attending to the conduct of other men. But are not the writings of philoſophers uſeful towards the attainment of this ſcience? Moſt certainly they are: for whatever improves the ſaga-

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city of judgment, the ſenſibility of moral perception, or the delicacy of taſte; whatever renders our knowledge of moral and intellectual facts more extenſive; whatever impreſſes our minds with more enlarged and more powerful ſentiments of duty, with more affecting views of God and Providence, and with greater energy of belief in the doctrines of natural religion;—every thing of this ſort either makes us more thoroughly acquainted, or prepares us for becoming more thoroughly acquainted with our own nature, and with that of other beings, and with the relations which they and we bear to one another. But I fear we ſhall not be able to improve ourſelves in any one of theſe reſpects, by reading the modern ſyſtems of ſcepticiſm. What account then are we to make of thoſe ſyſtems and their authors? The following diſſertation is partly deſigned as an anſwer to this queſtion. But it has a further view: which is, to examine the foundations of this ſcepticiſm, and ſee whether theſe be conſiſtent with what all mankind muſt acknowledge to be the foundations of truth; to inquire, whether the cultivation of ſcepticiſm be ſalutary or pernicious to ſcience and mankind; and whether it may not be poſſible to deviſe certain *criteria*, by which the abſurdity of its

its concluſions may be detected, even by thoſe who may not have leiſure or ſubtlety, or metaphyſical knowledge, ſufficient to qualify them for a logical confutation of all its premiſes. If it be confeſſed, that the preſent age has ſome tendency to licentiouſneſs, both in principle and practice, and that the works of ſceptical writers have ſome tendency to favour that licentiouſneſs; it will alſo be confeſſed, that this deſign is neither abſurd nor unſeaſonable.

A celebrated writer * on human nature has obſerved, that "if truth be at all within "the reach of human capacity, it is certain "it muſt lie very deep and abſtruſe:" and a little after he adds, "that he would eſteem "it a ſtrong preſumption againſt the philoſo-"phy he is going to unfold, were it ſo very "eaſy and obvious." I am ſo far from adopting this opinion, that I declare, in regard to the few things I have to ſay on human nature, that I ſhould eſteem it a very ſtrong preſumption againſt them, if they were not eaſy and obvious. Phyſical and mathematical truths are

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 3. 4.

often

often abſtruſe; but facts and experiments relating to the human mind, when expreſſed in proper words, ought to be obvious to all. I find that thoſe poets, hiſtorians, and noveliſts, who have given the moſt lively diſplays of human nature, and who abound moſt in ſentiments eaſily comprehended, and readily admitted as true, are the moſt entertaining, as well as the moſt uſeful. How then ſhould the philoſophy of the human mind be ſo difficult and obſcure? Indeed, if it be an author's determinate purpoſe to advance paradoxes, ſome of which are incredible, and others beyond comprehenſion; if he be willing to avail himſelf all he can of the natural ambiguity of language in ſupporting thoſe paradoxes; or if he enter upon inquiries too refined for human underſtanding; he muſt often be obſcure, and often unintelligible. But my views are very different. I intend only to ſuggeſt ſome hints for guarding the mind againſt error; and theſe, I hope, will be found to be deduced from principles which every man of common capacity may examine by his daily experience.

It is true, that ſeveral ſubjects of intricate ſpeculation are treated of in this book. But I have endeavoured, by conſtant appeals to

fact and experience, by illuſtrations and examples the moſt familiar I could think of, and by a plainneſs and perſpicuity of expreſſion which ſometimes may appear too much affected, to treat of them in a way, that I hope cannot fail to render them intelligible, even to thoſe who are not much converſant in ſtudies of this kind. Truth, like virtue, to be loved, needs only to be ſeen. My principles require no diſguiſe; on the contrary, they will, if I miſtake not, be moſt eaſily admitted by thoſe who beſt underſtand them. And I am perſuaded, that the ſceptical ſyſtem would never have made ſuch an alarming progreſs, if it had been well underſtood. The ambiguity of its language, and the intricacy and length of ſome of its fundamental inveſtigations, have unhappily been too ſucceſsful in producing that confuſion of thought, and indiſtinctneſs of apprehenſion, in the minds both of authors and readers, which are ſo favourable to error and ſophiſtry.

Few men have ever engaged in controverſy, religious, political, or philoſophical, without being in ſome degree chargeable with miſconception of the adverſary's meaning. That I have never erred in this way, I dare not affirm. But I am conſcious of having done

done every thing in my power to guard againſt it. The greater part of theſe papers have lain by me for ſeveral years. They have been repeatedly peruſed by ſome of the acuteſt philoſophers of the age, whom I have the honour to call my friends, and to whoſe advice and aſſiſtance, on this, as on other occaſions, I am deeply indebted. I have availed myſelf all I could of reading and converſation; and endeavoured, with all the candour I am maſter of, to profit by every hint of improvement, and to examine to the bottom every objection, that others have offered, or myſelf could deviſe. And may I not be permitted to add, that every one of thoſe who have peruſed this eſſay, has adviſed the author, to publiſh it; and that many of them have encouraged him by this inſinuation, to him the moſt flattering of all others, That by ſo doing, he would probably be of ſome ſervice to the cauſe of truth, virtue, and mankind? In this hope he ſubmits it to the public. And it is this hope only that could have induced him to attempt polemical diſquiſition: a ſpecies of writing, which, in his own judgment, is not the moſt creditable; which he knows, to his coſt, is not the moſt pleaſing; and of which he is well aware that it cannot fail to draw upon him

the reſentment of a numerous, powerful, and faſhionable party. But,

Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the paſt;
For thee, fair Virtue! welcome even the laſt.

If theſe pages, which he hopes none will condemn who have not read, ſhall throw any light on the firſt principles of moral ſcience; if they ſhall ſuggeſt, to the young and unwary, any cautions againſt that ſophiſtry, and licentiouſneſs of principle, which too much infect the converſations and compoſitions of the age; if they ſhall, in any meaſure, contribute to the ſatisfaction of any of the friends of truth and virtue; his purpoſe will be completely anſwered: and he will, to the end of his life, rejoice in the recollection of thoſe painful hours which he paſſed in the examination of this moſt important controverſy.

January, 1770.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

NATURE and IMMUTABILITY

OF

TRUTH,

IN OPPOSITION TO

SOPHISTRY and SCEPTICISM.

I PURPOSE to treat this ſubject in the following manner.

FIRST, I ſhall endeavour to trace the ſeveral kinds of Evidence and Reaſoning up to their firſt principles; with a view to aſcertain the Standard of Truth, and explain its immutability.

SECONDLY, I ſhall ſhow that my ſentiments on this head, however inconſiſtent with the genius of ſcepticiſm, and with the practice and principles of ſceptical writers, are yet perfectly conſiſtent with the genius

of

of true philoſophy, and with the practice and principles of thoſe who are univerſally allowed to have been the moſt ſucceſsful in the inveſtigation of truth: concluding with ſome inferences or rules, by which the more important fallacies of the ſceptical philoſophy may be detected by every perſon of common ſenſe, even though he ſhould not poſſeſs acuteneſs or metaphyſical knowledge ſufficient to qualify him for a logical confutation of them.

THIRDLY, I ſhall anſwer ſome objections; and make ſome remarks, by way of *Eſtimate of ſcepticiſm and ſceptical writers*.

I divide my diſcourſe in this manner, chiefly with a view to the reader's accommodation. An exact arrangement of parts is neceſſary to confer elegance on a whole; but I am more ſtudious of utility than of elegance. And though my ſentiments might have been exhibited in a more ſyſtematic order, I am apt to think, that the order in which they firſt occurred to me is the moſt natural, and may be the moſt effectual for accompliſhing my purpoſe.

PART

PART I.

OF THE STANDARD OF TRUTH.

THE love of truth has ever been accounted a good principle. Where it is known to prevail, we expect to find integrity and ſteadineſs; a temper of mind favourable to every virtue, and tending in an eminent degree to the advancement of public utility. To have no concern for the truth, to be falſe and fallacious, is a character which no perſon who is not utterly abandoned would chuſe to bear; it is a character from which we expect nothing but levity and inconſiſtence. Truth ſeems to be conſidered by all mankind as ſomething fixed, unchangeable, and eternal; it may therefore be thought, that to vindicate the permanency of truth is to diſpute without an adverſary. And indeed, if theſe queſtions were propoſed in general terms,—Is there ſuch a thing as truth? Are truth and falſehood different and oppoſite?

oppoſite? Is truth permanent and eternal?—few perſons would be hardy enough to anſwer in the negative. Attempts, however, have been made, ſometimes through inadvertence, and ſometimes (I fear) from deſign, to undermine the foundations of truth, and to render their ſtability queſtionable; and theſe attempts have been ſo vigorouſly forwarded, and ſo often renewed, that they now conſtitute a great part of what is called *the philoſophy of the human mind*.

It is difficult, perhaps impoſſible, to give a logical definition of Truth. But we ſhall endeavour to give ſuch a deſcription of it, as may make others underſtand what we mean by the word. The definitions of former writers are not ſo clear, nor ſo accurate, as could be wiſhed. Theſe therefore we ſhall overlook, without ſeeking either to explain or to correct them; and ſhall ſatisfy ourſelves with taking notice of ſome of the mental phenomena that attend the perception of truth. This ſeems to be the ſafeſt way of introducing the ſubject.

CHAP.

CHAPTER I.

Of the perception of Truth in general.

ON hearing theſe propoſitions,—I exiſt, Things equal to one and the ſame thing are equal to one another, The ſun roſe to-day, There is a God, Ingratitude ought to be blamed and puniſhed, The three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, &c.—I am conſcious, that my mind readily admits and acquieſces in them. I ſay, that I believe them to be true; that is, I conceive them to expreſs ſomething conformable to the nature of things *. Of the contrary propoſitions I ſhould ſay, that my mind does not acquieſce in them, but diſbelieves them, and conceives them to expreſs ſomething not conformable to the nature of things. My judgment in this caſe, I conceive to be the ſame which I ſhould form in regard to theſe propoſitions, if I were perfectly acquainted with all nature, in all its parts, and in all its laws †.

If

* —ὧσθ' ἕκαστον ὡς ἔχει τȣ ἶναι, οὕτω καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.
Arioſt. Metaph. lib. 2. cap. 1.

† This remark, when applied to truth in general, is ſubject to certain limitations; for which ſee part 2. chap. 1. ſect. 3.

If I be aſked, what I mean by *the nature of things*, I cannot otherwiſe explain myſelf, than by ſaying, that there is in my mind ſomething which induces me to think, that every thing exiſting in nature, is determined to exiſt, and to exiſt after a certain manner in conſequence of eſtabliſhed laws; and that whatever is agreeable to thoſe laws is agreeable to the nature of things, becauſe by thoſe laws the nature of all things is determined. Of thoſe laws I do not pretend to know any thing, except ſo far as they ſeem to be intimated to me by my own feelings, and by the ſuggeſtions of my own underſtanding. But theſe feelings and ſuggeſtions are ſuch, and affect me in ſuch a manner, that I cannot help receiving them, and truſting in them, and believing that their intimations are not fallacious, but ſuch as I ſhould approve if I were perfectly acquainted with every thing in the univerſe, and ſuch as I may approve, and admit of, and regulate my conduct by, without danger of any inconvenience.

It is not eaſy on this ſubject to avoid identical expreſſions. I am not certain that I have been able to avoid them. And perhaps I might have expreſſed my meaning more ſhortly and more clearly, by ſaying, that I account That to be *truth* which the conſti-

tution

tution of our nature determines us to believe, and That to be *falſhood* which the conſtitution of our nature determines us to diſbelieve. Believing and diſbelieving are ſimple acts of the mind; I can neither define nor deſcribe them in words; and therefore the reader muſt judge of their nature from his own experience. We often believe what we afterwards find to be falſe; but while belief continues, we think it true; when we diſcover its falſity, we believe it no longer.

Hitherto we have uſed the word *belief* to denote that act of the mind which attends the perception of truth in general. But truths are of different kinds; ſome are certain, others only probable: and we ought not to call that act of the mind which attends the perception of certainty, and that which attends the perception of probability, by one and the ſame name. Some have called the former *conviction*, and the latter *aſſent*. All convictions are equally ſtrong: but aſſent admits of innumerable degrees, from *moral certainty*, which is the higheſt degree, downward, through the ſeveral ſtages of *opinion*, to that ſuſpenſe of judgment which is called *doubt*.

We may, without abſurdity, ſpeak of probable truth, as well as of certain truth. What-

Whatever a rational being is determined, by the conſtitution of his nature, to admit as probable, may be called *probable truth*; the acknowledgment of it is as univerſal as rational nature, and will be as permanent. But, in this inquiry, we propoſe to confine ourſelves chiefly to that kind of truth which may be called certain, which enforces our *conviction*, and the belief of which, in a ſound mind, is not tinctured with any doubt or uncertainty.

The inveſtigation and perception of truth is commonly aſcribed to our rational faculties: and theſe have by ſome been reduced to two; Reaſon, and Judgment; the former being ſuppoſed to be converſant about certain truths, the latter chiefly about probabilities. But certain truths are not all of the ſame kind; ſome being ſupported by one ſort of evidence, and others by another: different energies of the underſtanding muſt therefore be exerted in perceiving them; and theſe different energies muſt be expreſſed by different names, if we would ſpeak of them diſtinctly and intelligibly. The certainty of ſome truths, for inſtance, is perceived intuitively; the certainty of others is perceived, not intuitively, but in conſequence of a proof. Moſt of the propoſitions of Euclid are of the latter kind; the

the axioms of geometry are of the former. Now, if that faculty by which we perceive truth in conſequence of a proof, be called *Reaſon*, ſurely that power by which we perceive ſelf-evident truth, ought to be diſtinguiſhed by a different name. It is of little conſequence what name we make choice of, provided that in chuſing it we depart not from the analogy of language; and that, in applying it, we avoid equivocation and ambiguity*. Some philoſophers of note † have given the name of *Common Senſe* to that faculty by which we perceive ſelf-evident truth; and, as the term ſeems proper enough, we ſhall adopt it. But in a ſubject of this kind, there is great danger of our being impoſed upon by words; we cannot therefore be too much upon our guard againſt that ſpecies of illuſion. We mean to draw ſome important inferences from this doctrine of the diſtinction between Reaſon and Common Senſe. Now theſe words are not always uſed in the ſtrict ſignification we have here aſſigned them: let us therefore take a view of all the ſimilar ſenſes in

* We might call the one *Reaſon*, and the other *Reaſoning*; but the ſimiliarity of the terms would frequently occaſion both obſcurity in the ſenſe, and harſhneſs in the ſound.

† Buffier, Dr. Reid, &c.

in which they are commonly uſed, and let us explain more particularly that ſenſe in which we are to uſe them; and thus we ſhall take every method in our power to ſecure ourſelves againſt the impropriety of confounding our notions by the uſe of ambiguous and indefinite language. Theſe philological diſcuſſions are indeed are no part of philoſophy; but they are very neceſſary to prepare us for it. "Qui ad interpretandam naturam "acceſſerit," ſays Bacon, "verborum mix-"tam naturam, et juvamenti et nocumenti "imprimis particípem, diſtincte ſciat*."

This diſtinction between Common ſenſe and Reaſon is no modern diſcovery†. The ancient geometricians were all acquainted with it. Ariſtotle treats of ſelf-evident principles in many parts of his works, particularly in the fourth book of his Metaphyſics, and in the firſt book of his latter Analytics. He calls them, *Axioms* or *Dignities*,

* De interpretatione Naturæ, ſent. 9.

† The κοινονημοσυνη of the Greek Stoics ſeems to mean that benevolent affection which men owe to ſociety and to one another. Some modern moraliſts have called it the *Public Senſe*. But the notion or idea we mean to expreſs by the term *Common Senſe* is quite different.

The *Senſus Communis* of the Latins hath ſeveral ſignifications. 1. It denotes this *Public Senſe*, or κοινονημοσυνη. *See Shafteſbury's Eſſay on the freedom of wit and humour, part 3. ſect. 1. Note.*

2. It

nities, Principles, and *Common Sentiments* *; and ſays of them, "That they are known "by their own evidence †; that except ſome "firſt principles be taken for granted, there "can

2. It denotes that experience and knowledge of life which is acquired by living in ſociety. Thus Horace ſeems to uſe it, *lib.* 1. *ſatir.* 3. *lin.* 66. And thus Quintilian, ſpeaking of the advantages of a public education; "Senſum ipſum quī "communis dicitur, ubi diſcet, cum ſe a congreſſu, qui non "hominibus ſolum, ſed mutis quoque animalibus naturalis eſt, "ſegregarit;" *lib.* 1. *cap.* 2. 3. It ſeems to ſignify that inſtinctive perſuaſion of truth which ariſes from intuitive evidence, and is the foundation of all reaſoning:

"Corpus enim per ſe communis deliquat eſſe
"Senſus: quo niſi prima fides fundata valebit,
"Haud erit occultis de rebus quo referentes
"Confirmare animi quicquam ratione queamus."
Lucretius, lib. 1. *ver.* 423.

* Ἀξιωματα. Αρχαι. Κοιναι δοξαι—Λέγω δε ἀποδεικτικας, καὶ τας κοινας δοξας, ἐξ ὧν ἅπαντες δεικνυσι· οἷον, ὅτι πᾶσι ἀναγκαῖον ἢ φαναι, ἢ ἀποφάναι. καὶ ἀδυνατον ἅμα εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι.
Metaphyſ. lib. 3. *cap.* 2.

† *Analytic. lib.* 2. *cap.* 16.——Of theſe firſt principles, a French Peripatetic, who wrote about the beginning of the laſt century, expreſſes himſelf thus: "Ces principes portent "le nom de communs, non ſeulement parce qu'ils ſervent à "pluſieurs ſciences, mais auſſi parce que *l'intelligence en* "*eſt commune à tous.* On les appelle auſſi *dignitez,* et "*notions communes*: à ſçavoir, dignitez, quaſi comme dignes "entre toutes les autres qu'on y adiouſte foy, à cauſe de la "grande excellence de leur clartè et evidence; et notions "communes, pour ce qu'ils ſont ſi connus, qu' auſſi toſt "que

" can be neither reaſon nor reaſoning *;
" that it is impoſſible that every truth
" ſhould admit of proof, otherwiſe proof
" would extend *in infinitum*, which is in-
" compatable with its nature †; and that
" if ever men attempt to prove a firſt prin-
" ciple, it is becauſe they are ignorant of
" the nature of proof ‡."

The

" que la ſignification des termes dont ils ſont compoſez eſt
" entenduë, ſans diſcourir ny argumenter davantage deſſus,
" chacun entend naturellement leur verité ; ſi ce n'eſt
" quelque hebeté privé de raiſon ; lequel je revoye à Ariſtote,
" qui pronounce, que ceux qui doutent, qu'il faut reverer
" les Dieux, ou aymer les parents, meritent d'eſtre punis; et
" que ceux qui doutent que la nege eſt blanche ont beſoin de
" ſens: et à Averroes, qui dit, que ceux qui ne ſçauroient
" diſtinguer ce qui eſt connu par ſoy d'avec ce qui ne l'eſt
" pas, ſont incapables de philoſopher ; et que ne pouvoir
" connoiſtre ces principes, procede de quelque defaut de na-
" ture, ou de peu d'exercice, ou d'une mauvaiſe accouſtum-
" ance enracinée."

Corps de toute la Philoſophie de Theophraſte Bonju, p. 79.

* Μηδεν γαρ τιθεντες, αναιρουσι το διαλέγεσθαι, ϗ ὅλως λογον.
Ariſtot. Metaphyſ. lib. 2. *cap.* 6.

† Ὅλως μεν γαρ ἀπαντων ἀδυνατον ἀποδειξιν ειναι· εις απειρον γαρ αν βαδίζοι· ὥστε μηδ' ὑυτως ειναι ἀποδειξιν.
Ariſtot. Metaphyſ. lib. 4. *cap.* 4.

‡ Αξιουσι δε ϗ τοῦτο ἀποδεικνυναι τινες δι' ἀπαιδευσιαν· ἐστι γαρ ἀπαιδευσια, το μη γινωσκειν τίνων δεῖ ζητεῖν ἀποδειξιν, ϗ τινων ου δεῖ.
Ib. Ibid.

I cite theſe authorities, that I may not be ſuppoſed to affect either an uncommon doctrine, or uncommon modes of expreſſion.

The word *Reaſon* is uſed in ſeveral different ſenſes. 1. It is uſed to ſignify that quality of human nature which diſtinguiſhes man from the inferior animals. Man is called a *reaſonable* being, and the brutes are ſaid to be *irrational*. But the faculty of reaſon, taking the word in a ſtrict ſenſe, is perhaps not more characteriſtical of the nature of man, than his moral faculty, or his imagination, or his power of artificial language, or his riſibility. Reaſon, in this acceptation, ſeems to be a general name for all the intellectual powers, as diſtinguiſhed from the ſenſitive part of our conſtitution. 2. Every thing that is called truth is ſaid to be perceived by reaſon: by reaſon, we are ſaid to perceive, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles; and we are alſo ſaid to perceive, by reaſon, that it is impoſſible for the ſame thing to be, and not to be. But theſe truths are of different kinds; and therefore, the energies of underſtanding, to which they are referred, ought to be called by different names. 3. The power of invention is ſometimes aſcribed to reaſon. Locke tells us, that it is reaſon which *diſcovers* and *arranges* the ſeveral intermediate proofs in an argument; an office which, according to the common uſe of words, is to be referred

not to reaſon, but to imagination. 4. Reaſon, as implying a faculty not marked by any other name, is uſed by thoſe who are moſt accurate in diſtinguiſhing, to ſignify that power of the human mind by which we draw inferences, or by which we are convinced, that a relation belongs to two ideas, on account of our having found, that theſe ideas bear certain relations to other ideas. In a word, it is that faculty which enables us, from relations or ideas that are known, to inveſtigate ſuch as are unknown; and without which we never could proceed in the diſcovery of truth a ſingle ſtep beyond firſt pinciples or intuitive axioms. And it is in this laſt ſenſe we are to uſe the word *Reaſon* in the courſe of this inquiry.

The term *Common Senſe* has alſo ſeveral different ſignifications. 1. Sometimes it ſeems to be ſynonymous with prudence. Thus we ſay, that a man has a large ſtock of common ſenſe, who is quick in perceiving remote conſequences, and thence inſtantaneouſly determines concerning the propriety of preſent conduct. 2. Common ſenſe, in certain inſtances, ſeemeth to be confounded with ſome of the powers of taſte. We often meet with perſons of great ſagacity in moſt of the ordinary affairs of life,

life, and very capable of accurate reaſoning, who yet, without any bad intention, commit the moſt egregious blunders in regard to decorum; both ſaying and doing what is offenſive to their company, and inconſiſtent with their own character: and this we are apt to impute to a defect in common ſenſe. But it ſeems rather to be owing to a defect in that kind of ſenſibility, or ſympathy, by which we ſuppoſe ourſelves in the ſituations of others, adopt their ſentiments, and in a manner perceive their very thoughts; and which is indeed the foundation of good breeding *. It is by this ſecret, and ſudden, and (to thoſe who are unacquainted with it) inexplicable, communication of feelings, that a man is enabled to avoid what would appear incongruous or offenſive. They who are prompted by inclination, or obliged by neceſſity, to ſtudy the art of recommending themſelves to others, acquire a wonderful facility in perceiving and avoiding all poſſible ways of giving offence; which is a proof, that this kind of ſenſibility may be much improved by habit: although there are, no doubt, in reſpect of this, as well as of all other modifications of perception,

* See Smith's Theory of moral ſentiments, ſect. 1.

original and conſtitutional differences in the frame of different minds. 3. Some men are diſtinguiſhed by an uncommon acuteneſs in diſcovering the characters of others: they ſeem to read the ſoul in the countenance, and with a ſingle glance to penetrate the deepeſt receſſes of the heart. In their preſence, the hypocrite is detected, notwithſtanding his ſpecious outſide; the gay effrontery of the coxcomb cannot conceal his inſignificance; and the man of merit appears conſpicuous under all the diſguiſes of an unaſſuming and ungainly modeſty. This talent is ſometimes called *Common Senſe*; but very improperly. It is far from being common; it is even exceedingly rare: it is to be found in men who are not remarkable for any other mental excellence; and we often ſee thoſe who in other reſpects are judicious enough, quite deſtitute of it. 4. Neither ought every common opinion to be referred to common ſenſe. Modes in dreſs, religion, and converſation, however abſurd in themſelves, may ſuit the notions or the taſte of a particular people: but none of us will ſay, that it is agreeable to common ſenſe, to worſhip more gods than one; to believe that one and the ſame body may be in ten thouſand different places

at

at the ſame time*; to like a face the better becauſe it is painted, or to diſlike a perſon becauſe he does not liſp in his pronunciation. Laſtly, The term *Common Senſe* hath in modern times been uſed by philoſophers, both French and Britiſh, to ſignify that power of of the mind which perceives truth, or commands belief, not by progreſſive argumentation, but by an inſtantaneous, inſtinctive, and irreſiſtible impulſe; derived neither from education nor from habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will, whenever its object is preſented, according to an eſtabliſhed law, and therefore not improperly called *Senſe* †; and acting in a ſimilar manner upon all, or at leaſt upon a great majority of mankind, and therefore properly called *Common Senſe.* It is in this ſignification that the term *Common Senſe* is uſed in the preſent inquiry.

That there is a real and eſſential difference between theſe two faculties: that common ſenſe cannot be accounted for, by being called the perfection of reaſon, nor reaſon, by being reſolved into common ſenſe, will perhaps appear from the following remarks.

1. We

* Tranſubſtantiation.

† For the circumſtances that characteriſe a *Senſe*, ſee Dr. Gerard's Eſſay on Taſte, part 3. ſect. 1. Note.

1. We are conſcious, from internal feeling, that the energy of underſtanding which perceives intuitive truth, is different from that other energy which unites a concluſion with a firſt principle, by a gradual chain of intermediate relations. We believe the truth of an inveſtigated concluſion, becauſe we can aſſign a reaſon for our belief; we believe an intuitive principle, without being able to aſſign any other reaſon for our belief than this, that the law of our nature determines us to believe it; even as the law of our nature determines us to ſee a colour when preſented to our open eyes at noonday. 2. We cannot diſcern any *neceſſary* connexion between reaſon and common ſenſe: they are indeed generally connected; but we can conceive a being endued with the one who is deſtitute of the other. Nay, we often find, that this is in fact the caſe. In dreams, we ſometimes reaſon without common ſenſe. Through a defect of common ſenſe, we adopt abſurd principles; but ſuppoſing our principles true, our reaſoning is often unexceptionable. The ſame thing may be obſerved in certain kinds of madneſs. A man who believes himſelf made of glaſs, ſhall yet reaſon very juſtly concerning the means of preſerving his ſuppoſed brittleneſs from flaws and fractures.

Nay,

Nay, what is ſtill more to the purpoſe, we ſometimes meet with perſons, whom it would be injurious to charge with inſanity, who, though defective in common ſenſe, have yet, by converſing much with polemical writers, improved their reaſoning faculty to ſuch a degree, as to puzzle and put to ſilence thoſe who are greatly their ſuperiors in every other mental endowment. 3. This leads us to remark a third difference between theſe two faculties; namely, that the one is more in our power than the other. There are few faculties, either of our mind or body, more improveable by culture, than that of reaſoning; whereas common ſenſe; like other inſtincts, arrives at maturity with almoſt no care of ours. To teach the art of reaſoning, or rather of wrangling, is eaſy; but it is impoſſible to teach common ſenſe to one who wants it. You may make him remember a ſet of firſt principles, and ſay that he believes them, even as you may teach one born blind to ſpeak intelligibly of colours and light; but neither to the one, nor to the other, can you by any means communicate the peculiar feeling which accompanies the operation of that faculty which nature has denied him. A man defective in common ſenſe may acquire learning; he may

may even poſſeſs genius to a certain degree: but the defect of nature he never can ſupply: a peculiar modification of ſcepticiſm, or credulity, or levity, will to the end of his life diſtinguiſh him from other men.---It would evidence a deplorable degree of irrationality, if one could not perceive the truth of a geometrical axiom; ſuch inſtances are uncommon: but the number of ſelf-evident principles cogniſable by man is very great, and more vigour of mind may be neceſſary to the perception of ſome, than to that of others. In this reſpect, therefore, there may be great diverſities in the meaſure of common ſenſe which different men enjoy.---Further, of two men, one of whom, though he acknowledges the truth of a firſt principle, is but little affected with it, and is eaſily induced to become ſceptical in regard to it; while the other has a vivid perception of its truth, is deeply affected with it, and firmly truſts to his own feelings without doubt or heſitation; I ſhould not ſcruple to ſay, that the latter poſſeſſes the greater ſhare of common ſenſe: and in this reſpect too, I preſume the minds of different men will be found to be very different. Theſe diverſities are, I think, to be referred, for the moſt part, to the original conſtitution of the mind, which it is not in the power

of

of education to alter. I acknowledge, however, that common ſenſe, like other inſtincts, may languiſh for want of exerciſe; as in the caſe of a perſon who, blinded by a falſe religion, has been all his days accuſtomed to diſtruſt his own ſentiments, and to receive his creed from the mouth of a prieſt. I acknowledge too, that freedom of inquiry does generally produce a juſter, as well as more liberal, turn of thinking, than can ever be expected, while men account it damnable even to think differently from the eſtabliſhed mode. But from this we can only infer, that common ſenſe is improveable to a certain degree. Or perhaps this only proves, that the dictates of common ſenſe are ſometimes over-ruled, and rendered ineffectual, by the influence of ſophiſtry and ſuperſtition operating upon a weak and diffident temper. 4. It deſerves alſo to be remarked, that a diſtinction extremely ſimilar to the preſent is acknowledged by the vulgar, who ſpeak of mother-wit as ſomething different from the deductions of reaſon, and the refinements of ſcience. When puzzled with argument, they have recourſe to their common ſenſe, and acquieſce in it ſo ſteadily, as often to render all the arts of the logician ineffectual. "I am confuted, "but not convinced," is an apology ſometimes

times offered, when one has nothing to oppoſe to the arguments of the antagoniſt, but the original undiſguiſed feelings of his own mind. This apology is indeed very inconſiſtent with the dignity of philoſophic pride; which, taking for granted that nothing exceeds the limits of human capacity, profeſſes to confute whatever it cannot believe, and, which is ſtill more difficult, to believe whatever it cannot confute: but this apology may be perfectly conſiſtent with ſincerity and candor; and with that principle of which Pope ſays, that "though no ſcience, it is fairly 'worth the ſeven."

Thus far we have endeavoured to diſtinguiſh and aſcertain the ſeparate provinces of Reaſon and Common Senſe. Their connexion and mutual dependence, and the extent of their reſpective juriſdictions, we now proceed more particularly to inveſtigate.—I ought perhaps to make an apology for theſe, and ſome other metaphorical expreſſions. And indeed it were to be wiſhed, that in all matters of ſcience, they could be laid aſide; for the indiſcreet uſe of metaphor has done great harm, by leading philoſophers to miſtake verbal analogies for real ones; and often, too, by giving plauſibility to nonſenſe, as well as by diſguiſing and perplexing very plain doctrines with an affected pomp of high-

high-ſounding words and gaudy images. But in the philoſophy of the human mind, it is impoſſible to keep clear of metaphor; becauſe we cannot ſpeak intelligibly of immaterial things, without continual alluſions to matter, and its qualities. All I need to ſay further on this head is, that I mean not by theſe metaphors to impoſe upon the reader; and that I ſhall do my utmoſt to prevent their impoſing upon myſelf.

It is ſtrange to obſerve, with what reluctance ſome people acknowledge the power of inſtinct. That man is governed by reaſon, and the brutes by inſtinct, is a favourite topic with certain philoſophers; who, like other froward children, ſpurn the hand that leads them; and deſire, above all things, to be left at their own diſpoſal. Were this boaſt founded in truth, it might be ſuppoſed to mean little more, than that man is governed by himſelf, and the brutes by their Maker*. But, luckily for man, it is not founded in truth, but in ignorance, inattention, and ſelf-conceit. Our inſtincts, as well as our rational powers, are far ſuperior, both in number and dignity, to thoſe which the brutes enjoy;

* And Reaſon raiſe o'er Inſtinct as you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis man.
Pope's Eſſay on Man, Ep. 3. ver. 99.

enjoy; and it were well for us, on many occaſions, if we laid our ſyſtems aſide, and were more attentive in obſerving theſe impulſes of nature in which reaſon has no part. Far be it from me to ſpeak with diſreſpect of any of the gifts of God; every work of his is good; but the beſt things, when abuſed, may become pernicious. Reaſon is a noble faculty, and, when kept within its proper ſphere, and applied to uſeful purpoſes, proves a mean of exalting human creatures almoſt to the rank of ſuperior beings. But this faculty has been much perverted, often to vile, and often to inſignificant purpoſes; ſometimes chained like a ſlave or malefactor, and ſometimes ſoaring in forbidden and unknown regions. No wonder, then, if it has been frequently made the inſtrument of ſeducing and bewildering mankind, and of rendering philoſophy contemptible.

In the ſcience of body, glorious diſcoveries have been made by a right uſe of reaſon. When men are once ſatisfied to take things as they find them; when they believe Nature upon her bare declaration, without ſuſpecting her of any deſign to impoſe upon them; when their utmoſt ambition is to be her ſervants and humble interpreters; then, and not till then, will phi-

philoſophy proſper. But of thoſe who have applied themſelves to the ſcience of Human Nature, it may truly be ſaid, (of many of them at leaſt), that too much reaſoning hath made them mad. Nature ſpeaks to us by our external, as well as by our internal, ſenſes; it is ſtrange, that we ſhould believe her in the one caſe, and not in the other; it is moſt ſtrange, that ſuppoſing her fallacious, we ſhould think ourſelves capable of detecting the cheat. Common ſenſe tells me, that the ground on which I ſtand is hard, material, and ſolid, and has a real, ſeparate, independent exiſtence. BERKELEY and HUME tell me, that I am impoſed upon in this matter: for that the ground under my feet is really an idea in my mind; that its very eſſence conſiſts in being perceived; and that the ſame inſtant it ceaſes to be perceived, it muſt alſo ceaſe to exiſt: in a word, that *to be*, and *to be perceived*, when predicated of the ground, the ſun, the ſtarry heavens, or any corporeal object, ſignify preciſely the ſame thing. Now if my common ſenſe be miſtaken, who ſhall aſcertain and correct the miſtake? Our reaſon, it is ſaid. Are then the inferences of reaſon in this inſtance clearer, and more deciſive, than the dictates of common ſenſe? By no means; I ſtill truſt to my common

ſenſe

ſenſe as before; and I feel that I muſt do ſo. But ſuppoſing the inferences of the one faculty as clear and deciſive as the dictates of the other, yet who will aſſure me, that my reaſon is leſs liable to miſtake than my common ſenſe? And if reaſon be miſtaken, what ſhall we ſay? Is this miſtake to be rectified by a ſecond reaſoning, as liable to miſtake as the firſt?—In a word, we muſt deny the diſtinction between truth and falſehood, adopt univerſal ſcepticiſm, and wander without end from one maze of error and uncertainty to another; a ſtate of mind ſo miſerable, that Milton makes it one of the torments of the damned;---or elſe we muſt ſuppoſe, that one of theſe faculties is naturally of higher authority than the other; and that either reaſon ought to ſubmit to common ſenſe, or common ſenſe to reaſon, whenever a variance happens between them.

It has been ſaid, that every inquiry in philoſophy ought to begin with doubt;---that nothing is to be taken for granted, and nothing believed, without proof. If this be admitted, it muſt alſo be admitted, that reaſon is the ultimate judge of truth, to which common ſenſe muſt continually act in ſubordination. But this I cannot admit; becauſe I am able to prove the contrary by the moſt inconteſtable evidence. I am able to prove,

prove, that "except we believe many things "without proof, we never can believe any "thing at all; for that all ſound reaſoning "muſt ultimately reſt on the principles of "common ſenſe; that is, on principles in-"tuitively certain, or intuitively probable; "and, conſequently, that common ſenſe is "the ultimate judge of truth, to which rea-"ſon muſt continually act in ſubordina-"tion."—This I ſhall prove by a fair induction of particulars.

CHAP. II.

All reaſoning terminates in firſt principles. All evidence ultimately intuitive. Common Senſe the Standard of Truth to Man.

IN this induction, we cannot comprehend all ſorts of evidence, and modes of reaſoning; but we ſhall endeavour to inveſtigate the origin of thoſe * which are the moſt important,

* That the induction here given is ſufficiently comprehenſive, will appear from the following analyſis.

All the objects of the human underſtanding may be reduced to two claſſes, viz. *Abſtract Ideas*, and *Things really exiſting*.

Of

portant, and of the moſt extenſive influence in ſcience, and common life; beginning with the ſimpleſt and cleareſt, and advancing gradually to thoſe which are more complicated, or leſs perſpicuous.

SECT.

Of *Abſtract Ideas, and their Relations*, all our knowledge is *certain*, being founded on MATHEMATICAL EVIDENCE (*a*); which comprehends, 1. Intuitive Evidence, and, 2. the Evidence of ſtrict demonſtration.

We judge of *Things really exiſting*; either, 1. from *our own experience*; or, 2. from *the experience of other men*.

1. Judging of *Real Exiſtences* from *our own experience*, we attain either *Certainty* or *Probability*. Our knowledge is *certain* when ſupported by the evidence, 1. Of SENSE EXTERNAL (*b*) and INTERNAL (*c*): 2. Of MEMORY (*d*); and, 3. Of LEGITIMATE INFERENCES OF THE CAUSE FROM THE EFFECT (*e*).——Our knowledge is *probable*, when, *from* facts already experienced, we argue, 1. *to* facts OF THE SAME KIND (*f*) not experienced; and, 2. *to* facts OF A SIMILAR KIND (*g*) not experienced. This knowledge, though called *probable*, often riſes to moral certainty.

2. Judging of *Real Exiſtences* from *the experience of other men*, we have the EVIDENCE OF THEIR TESTIMONY (*h*). The mode of underſtanding produced by that evidence is properly called *Faith*; and this faith ſometimes amounts to *probable opinion*, and ſometimes riſes even to *abſolute certainty*.

(*a*) Section 1. (*b*) Sect. 2. (*c*) Sect. 3. (*d*) Sect. 4. (*e*) Sect. 5. (*f*) Sect. 6. (*g*) Sect. 7. (*h*) Sect. 8.

SECTION I.

Of Mathematical Reaſoning.

THE evidence that takes place in pure mathematics, produces the higheſt aſſurance and certainty in the mind of him who attends to, and underſtands it; for no principles are admitted into this ſcience, but ſuch as are either ſelf-evident, or ſuſceptible of demonſtration. Should a man refuſe to believe a demonſtrated concluſion, the world would impute his obſtinacy, either to want of underſtanding, or to want of honeſty: for every perſon of underſtanding feels, that by mathematical demonſtration he muſt be convinced whether he will or not. There are two kinds of mathematical demonſtration. The firſt is called *direct*; and takes place, when a concluſion is inferred from premiſes that render it neceſſarily true: and this perhaps is a more perfect, or at leaſt a ſimpler, kind of proof, than the other; but both are equally convincing. The other kind is called *indirect*, *apagogical*, or *ducens ad abſurdum*; and takes place when, by ſuppoſing a propoſition

falſe, we are led into an abſurdity, which there is no other way to avoid, than by ſuppoſing the propoſition true. In this manner it is proved, that the propoſition is not, and cannot be, falſe; in other words, that it is a certain truth. Every ſtep in a mathematical proof either is ſelf-evident, or muſt have been formerly demonſtrated; and every demonſtration does finally reſolve itſelf into intuitive or ſelf-evident principles, which it is impoſſible to prove, and equally impoſſible to diſbelieve. Theſe firſt principles conſtitute the foundation of mathematics: if you diſprove them, you overturn the whole ſcience; if you refuſe to believe them, you cannot, conſiſtently with ſuch refuſal, acquieſce in any mathematical truth whatſoever. But you may as well attempt to blow out the ſun, as to diſprove theſe principles: and if you ſay, that you do not believe them*, you will be charged either with falſehood or with folly; you may as well hold your hand in the fire, and ſay that you feel no

* Si quelque opiniaſtre les nie de la voix, on ne l'en ſcauriot empeſcher; mais cela ne luy eſt pas permis interieurement en ſon eſprit, parce que ſa lumiere naturelle y repugne, qui eſt la partie où ſe rapporte la demonſtration et le ſyllogiſme, et non aux paroles externes. Au moyen de quoy s'il ſe trouve quelqu'un qui ne les puiſſe entendre, cettuy-là eſt incapable de diſcipline.

Dialectique de Bonjou, liv. 3. ch. 3.

no pain. By the law of our nature, we muſt feel in the one caſe, and believe in the other; even as, by the ſame law, we muſt adhere to the earth, and cannot fall headlong to the clouds.

But who will pretend to prove a mathematical axiom, That a whole is greater than a part, or, That things equal to one and the ſame thing are equal to one another? Every proof muſt be clearer and more evident than the thing to be proved. Can you then aſſume any more evident principle, from which the truth of theſe axioms may be conſequentially inferred? It is impoſſible; becauſe they are already as evident as any thing can be*. You may bring the

* Different opinions have prevailed concerning the nature of theſe geometrical axioms. Some ſuppoſe, that an axiom is not ſelf-evident, except it imply an identical propoſition; that therefore this axiom, *It is impoſſible for the ſame thing, at the ſame time, to be and not to be*, is the only axiom that can properly be called intuitive; and that all thoſe other propoſitions commonly called *axioms*, ought to be demonſtrated by being reſolved into this fundamental axiom. But if this could be done, which I fear is not poſſible, mathematical truth would not be one whit more certain than it is. Thoſe other axioms produce abſolute certainty, and produce it immediately, without any proceſs of thought or reaſoning that we can diſcover. And if the truth of a propoſition be clearly and certainly perceived by all men without proof, and if no proof whatever could make it more clear or more certain, it ſeems captious not to allow that propoſition the name of *Intuitive Axiom*.—Others ſuppoſe, that though the demonſtration of ma-

matter to the teſt of the ſenſes, by laying a few halfpence and farthings upon the table; but the evidence of ſenſe is not more unqueſtionable, than that of abſtract intuitive truth; and therefore the former evidence, though to one ignorant of the meaning of the terms, it might ſerve to explain and illuſtrate the latter, can never prove it. But not to reſt any thing on the ſignification *we* affix to the word *proof*; and to remove every poſſibility of doubt as to this matter; let us ſuppoſe, that the evidence of external ſenſe is more unqueſtionable than that of abſtract intuitive truth, and that every intuitive principle in mathematics may thus be brought to the teſt of ſenſe; and if we cannot call the evidence of ſenſe a proof, let us call it a confirmation of the abſtract principle: yet what do we gain by this method of illuſtration? We only diſcover, that the evidence of abſtract intuitive truth is

mathematical axioms is not abſolutely neceſſary, yet that theſe axioms are ſuſceptible of demonſtration, and ought to be demonſtrated to thoſe who require it. Dr. Barrow is of this opinion. So is Apollonius; who, agreeably to it, has attempted a demonſtration of this axiom, That *things equal to one and the ſame thing are equal to one another*.—But whatever account we make of theſe opinions, they affect not our doctrine. However far the demonſtration of axioms may be carried, it muſt at laſt terminate in *one* principle of common ſenſe, if not in *many*; which principle we muſt believe without proof whether we will or no.

is reſolvable into, or may be illuſtrated by, the evidence of ſenſe. And it will be ſeen in the next ſection, that we believe in the evidence of external ſenſe, not becauſe we can prove it to be true, but becauſe the law of our nature determines us to believe in it without proof. So that in whatever way we view this ſubject, the point we mean to illuſtrate appears certain, namely, "That all mathematical truth is founded in "certain firſt principles, which common "ſenſe or inſtinct compels us to believe "without proof, whether we will or not."

Nor would the foundation of mathematics be in the leaſt degree more ſtable, if theſe axioms did amit of proof, or were all reſolvable into one primary axiom expreſſed by an identical propoſition. As the caſe now ſtands, we are abſolutely certain of their truth; and abſolute certainty is all that demonſtration can produce. We are convinced by a proof, becauſe our conſtitution is ſuch, that we muſt be convinced by it: and we believe a ſelf-evident axiom, becauſe our conſtitution is ſuch that we muſt believe it. You ask, why I believe what is ſelf-evident. I may as well ask, why you believe what is proved. Neither queſtion admits of an anſwer; or rather, to both queſtions the anſwer

ſwer is the ſame, namely, Becauſe I muſt believe it.

Whether our belief in theſe caſes be agreeable to the eternal relations and fitneſſes of things, and ſuch as we ſhould entertain if we were perfectly acquainted with all the laws of nature, is a queſtion which no perſon of a ſound mind can have any ſcruple to anſwer, with the fulleſt aſſurance, in the affirmative. Certain it is, our conſtitution is ſo framed, that we muſt believe to be true, and conformable to univerſal nature, that which is intimated to us, as ſuch, by the original ſuggeſtions of our own underſtanding. If theſe are fallacious, it is the Deity who makes them ſo; and therefore we can never rectify, or even detect, the fallacy. But we cannot even ſuppoſe them fallacious, without violating our nature; nor, if we acknowledge a God, without the moſt abſurd and moſt audacious impiety; for in this ſuppoſition it is implied, that we ſuppoſe the Deity a deceiver. Nor can we, conſiſtently with ſuch a ſuppoſition, acknowledge any diſtinction between truth and falſehood, or believe that one inch is leſs than ten thouſand miles, or even that we ourſelves exiſt.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Of the Evidence of External Senſe.

ANother claſs of truths producing conviction, and abſolute certainty, are thoſe which depend upon the evidence of the external ſenſes; Hearing, Seeing, Touching, Taſting, and Smelling. On this evidence is founded all our knowledge of external or material things; and therefore all concluſions in Natural Philoſophy, and all thoſe prudential conſiderations which regard the preſervation of our body, as it is liable to be affected by the ſenſible qualities of matter, muſt finally be reſolved into this principle, That things are as our ſenſes repreſent them. When I touch a ſtone, I am conſcious of a certain ſenſation, which I call a *ſenſation of hardneſs*. But this ſenſation is not hardneſs itſelf, nor any thing like hardneſs: it is nothing more than a ſenſation or feeling in my mind; accompanied, however, with an irreſiſtable belief, that this ſenſation is excited by the application of an external and hard ſubſtance to ſome part of my body. This belief as certainly accompanies the ſenſation,

ſation, as the ſenſation accompanies the application of the ſtone to my organ of ſenſe. I believe, with as much aſſurance, and as unavoidably, that the external thing exiſts, and is hard, as I believe that I receive, and am conſcious of, the ſenſation of hardneſs; or, to ſpeak more ſtrictly, the ſenſation which by experience I know to be the ſign of my touching a hard body*. Now, why do I believe that this ſenſation is a real ſenſation, and really felt by me? Becauſe my conſtitution is ſuch that I muſt believe ſo. And why do I believe, in conſequence of my receiving this ſenſation, that I touch an external object, really exiſting, material, and hard? The anſwer is the ſame: the matter is incapable of proof: I believe, becauſe I muſt believe. Can I avoid believing, that I really am conſcious of receiving this ſenſation? No. Can I avoid believing, that the external thing exiſts, and has a certain quality, which fits it, on being applied to my hand, to excite a certain feeling or ſenſation in my mind? No; I muſt believe this, whether I will or not. Nor could I diveſt myſelf of this belief, though my life and future happineſs depended on the conſequence.—To believe our ſenſes, therefore, is according to the law of our nature; and we

* See Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the human mind, chap. 5. ſect 3.

we are prompted to this belief by inſtinct, or common ſenſe. I am as certain, that at preſent I am in a houſe, and not in the open air; that I ſee by the light of the ſun, and not by the light of a candle; that I feel the ground hard under my feet; and that I lean againſt a real material table,—as I can be of the truth of any geometrical axiom, or of any demonſtrated concluſion; nay, I am as certain of all this as of my own exiſtence. But I cannot prove by argument, that there is ſuch a thing as matter in the world, or even that I myſelf exiſt: and yet I know as aſſuredly, that I do exiſt, and that there is a real material ſun, and a real material world, with mountains, trees, houſes, and animals, exiſting ſeparately, and independently of me and my faculties; I ſay, I know all this with as much aſſurance of conviction, as the moſt irrefragable demonſtration could produce. Is it unreaſonable to believe in theſe caſes *without* proof? Then, I affirm, it is equally unreaſonable to believe in any caſe *with* proof. Our belief in either caſe is unavoidable, and according to the law of our nature; and if it be unreaſonable to think, according to the law of our nature, it muſt be equally unreaſonable to adhere to the earth, to be nouriſhed with food, or to die when the head is ſeparated from the body. It is indeed eaſy to affirm any thing, provided

provided a man can reconcile himſelf to hypocriſy and falſhood. A man may affirm, that he ſees with the ſoles of his feet, that he believes there is no material world, that he doubts of his own exiſtence. He may as well ſay, that he believes one and two to be equal to ſix, a part to be greater than a whole, a circle to be a triangle; and that it may be poſſible for the ſame thing, at the ſame time, to be and not to be.

But it is ſaid, that our ſenſes do often impoſe upon us; and that by means of reaſon we are enabled to detect the impoſture, and to judge rightly even where our ſenſes give us wrong information; that therefore our belief in the evidence of ſenſe is not inſtinctive or intuitive, but ſuch as may be either confuted or confirmed by reaſoning. We ſhall acknowledge that our ſenſes do often impoſe upon us: but a little attention will convince us, that reaſon, though it may be employed in correcting the preſent fallacious ſenſation, by referring it to a former ſenſation, received by us, or by other men, is not the ultimate judge in this matter; for that all ſuch reaſoning is reſolvable into this principle of common ſenſe, That things are what our external ſenſes repreſent them. One inſtance will ſuffice at preſent for illuſtration of this point *.

After

* See part 2. chap. 1. ſect. 2.

After having looked a moment at the ſun, I ſee a black, or perhaps a luminous, circle ſwimming in the air, apparently at the diſtance of two or three feet from my eyes. That I ſee ſuch a circle, is certain; that I believe I ſee it, is certain; that I believe its appearance to be owing to ſome cauſe, is alſo certain:—thus far there can be no impoſture, and there is no ſuppoſition of any. Suppoſe me from this appearance to conclude, that a real, ſolid, tangible or viſible, round ſubſtance, of a black or yellow colour, is actually ſwimming in the air before me; in this I ſhould be miſtaken. How then come I to know that I am miſtaken? I may know it in ſeveral ways. 1. I ſtretch out my hand to the place where the circle ſeems to be floating in the air; and having felt nothing, I am inſtantly convinced, that there is no tangible ſubſtance in that place. Is this conviction an inference of reaſon? No; it is a conviction ariſing from our innate propenſity to believe, that things are as our ſenſes repreſent them. By this innate or inſtinctive propenſity I believe that what I touch exiſts; by the ſame propenſity I believe, that where I touch nothing, there nothing tangible does exiſt. If in the preſent caſe I were ſuſpicious of the veracity of my ſenſes, I ſhould neither believe nor diſbelieve. 2. I turn my eyes towards the oppoſite quarter of the heavens; and

and having ſtill obſerved the ſame circle floating before them, and knowing by experience, that the motion of bodies placed at a diſtance from me does not follow or depend on the motion of my body, I conclude, that the appearance is owing, not to a real, external, corporeal object, but to ſome diſorder in my organ of ſight. Here reaſoning is employed: but where does it terminate? It terminates in experience, which I have acquired by means of my ſenſes. But if I believed them fallacious, if I believed things to be otherwiſe than my ſenſes repreſent them, I ſhould never acquire experience at all. Or, 3. I apply, firſt to one man, then to another, and then to a third, who all aſſure me, that they perceive no ſuch circle floating in the air, and at the ſame time inform me of the true cauſe of the appearance. I believe their declaration, either becauſe I have had experience of their veracity, or becauſe I have an innate propenſity to credit teſtimony. To gain experience implies a belief in the evidence of ſenſe, which reaſoning cannot account for; and a propenſity to credit teſtimony previous to experience or reaſoning, is equally unaccountable *.---So that, although we

* See ſect. 8. of this chapter.

we acknowledge ſome of our ſenſes, in ſome inſtances, deceitful, our detection of the deceit, whether by the evidence of our other ſenſes, or by a retroſpect to our paſt experience, or by our truſting to the teſtimony of other men, does ſtill imply, that we do and muſt believe our ſenſes previouſly to all reaſoning *.

A human creature born with a propenſity to diſbelieve his ſenſes, would be as uſeleſs and helpleſs as if he wanted them. To his own preſervation he could contribute nothing; and, after ages of being, would remain as deſtitute of knowledge and experience, as when he began to be.

Sometimes we ſeem to diſtruſt the evidence of our ſenſes, when in reality we only doubt whether we have that evidence. I may appeal to any man, if he were thoroughly convinced that he had really, when awake, ſeen and converſed with a ghoſt, whether any reaſoning would convince him that it was a deluſion. Reaſoning might lead him to ſuſpect that he had been dreaming, and therefore to doubt whether or not he had the evidence of ſenſe; but if he were aſſured that he had that evidence, no arguments whatſoever would ſhake his belief.

* See part 2. chap. 1. ſect. 2.

SECT.

SECT III.

Of the Evidence of Internal Senſe, or Conſciouſneſs.

BY attending to what paſſes in my mind, I know, not only that it exiſts, but alſo that it exerts certain powers of action and perception; which, on account either of a diverſity in their objects, or of a difference in their manner of operating, I conſider as ſeparate and diſtinct faculties; and which I find it expedient to diſtinguiſh by different names, that I may be able to ſpeak of them ſo as to be underſtood. Thus I am conſcious that at one time I exert memory, at another time imagination: ſometimes I believe, ſometimes I doubt: the performance of certain actions, and the indulgence of certain affections, is attended with an agreeable feeling of a peculiar kind, which I call moral approbation; different actions and affections excite the oppoſite feeling, of moral diſapprobation: to relieve diſtreſs, I feel to be meritorious and praiſe-worthy; to pick a pocket, I know to be blameable, and worthy of puniſhment: I am conſcious that ſome actions are in my power, and that

that others are not; that when I neglect to do what I ought to do, and can do, I deſerve to be puniſhed; and that when I act neceſſarily, or upon unavoidable and irreſiſtable compulſion, I deſerve neither puniſhment nor blame. Of all theſe ſentiments I am as conſcious, and as certain, as of my own exiſtence. I cannot prove that I feel them, neither to myſelf, nor to others; but that I do really feel them, is as evident to me as demonſtration could make it. I cannot prove, in regard to my moral feelings, that they are conformable to any extrinſick and eternal relations of things; but I know that my conſtitution neceſſarily determines me to believe them juſt and genuine, even as it determines me to believe that I myſelf exiſt, and that things are as my external ſenſes repreſent them. And a ſophiſter could no more prove to my conviction, that theſe feelings are fallacious, or that I have no ſuch feelings, than he could prove to my conviction, that two and two may be equal to five, or that my friend is as much preſent with me when I think of him at a thouſand miles diſtance, as when I ſit and converſe with him in the ſame chamber. An expert logician might perhaps puzzle me with words, and propoſe difficulties I could not ſolve: but he might as well attempt to convince me, that I do not exiſt, as that I do not feel what I am conſcious I do feel.

feel. And if he could induce me to ſuſpect that I may poſſibly be miſtaken, what ſtandard of truth could he propoſe to me, more evident, and of higher authority, than my own feelings? Shall I believe his teſtimony, and diſbelieve my own ſenſations? Shall I admit his reaſons, becauſe I cannot confute them, although common ſenſe tells me they are falſe? Shall I ſuffer the ambiguities of artificial language to prevail againſt the clear, the intelligible, the irreſiſtible voice of nature?—Am I to judge of the colouring of a flower by moonſhine, or by the light of the ſun? Or, becauſe I cannot, by candle-light, diſtinguiſh green from blue, ſhall I therefore infer, that green and blue are the ſame?

We cannot diſbelieve the evidence of internal ſenſe, without offering violence to our nature. And if we be led into ſuch diſbelief, or diſtruſt, by the ſophiſtry of pretended philoſophers, we act juſt as wiſely as a mariner would do, who ſhould ſuffer himſelf to be perſuaded, that the pole-ſtar is continually changing its place, but that the wind always blows from the ſame quarter. Common ſenſe, or inſtinct, which prompts men to truſt to their own feelings, hath in all ages continued the ſame: but the intereſts, purſuits, and abilities of philoſo-

loſophers, are ſuſceptible of endleſs variety; and their theories vary accordingly.

Let it not be thought, that theſe objects and faculties of internal ſenſation are things too evaneſcent to be attended to, or that their evidence is too weak to produce a ſteady and well-grounded conviction. They are more neceſſary to our happineſs than even the powers and objects of external ſenſe; yea, they are no leſs neceſſary to our exiſtence. What can be of greater conſequence to man, than his moral ſentiments, his reaſon, his memory, his imagination? What more intereſting, than to know, whether his notions of duty and of truth be the dictates of his nature, that is, the voice of God, or the poſitive inſtitutions of men? What is it to which a wiſe man will pay more attention, than to his reaſon and conſcience, thoſe divine monitors, by which he is to judge even of religion itſelf, and which he is not at liberty to diſobey, though an angel from heaven ſhould command him? The generality of mankind, however ignorant of the received diſtinctions and explications of their internal powers, do yet by their conduct declare, that they feel their influence, and acknowledge their authenticity. Every inſtance of their being governed by a principle of moral obligation, is a proof of this.

The believe an action to be lawful in the ſight of God, when they are conſcious of a ſentiment of lawfulneſs attending the performance of it: they believe a certain mode of conduct to be incumbent on them in certain circumſtances, becauſe a notion of duty ariſes in their mind, when they contemplate that conduct in relation to thoſe circumſtances. — "I ought to be grateful "for a favour received. Why? Becauſe "my conſcience tells me ſo. How do you "know that you ought to do that of which "your conſcience enjoins the performance? "I can give no further reaſon for it; but "I *feel* that ſuch is my duty." Here the inveſtigation muſt ſtop; or, if carried a little further, it muſt return to this point: —"I know that I ought to do what my "conſcience enjoins, becauſe God is the "author of my conſtitution; and I obey "His will, when I act according to the "principles of my conſtitution. Why do "you obey the will of God? Becauſe it is "my duty. How know you that? Be-"cauſe my conſcience tells me ſo," &c.

If a man were ſceptical in this matter, it would not be in the power of argument to cure him. Such a man could not be ſaid to have any moral principle diſtinct from

from the hope of reward, the fear of punishment, or the force of cuſtom. But that there is in human nature a moral principle diſtinct from thoſe motives, has been felt and acknowledged by men of all ages and nations; and indeed was never denied or doubted, except by a few metaphyſicians, who, through want either of ſenſe or of honeſty, found themſelves diſpoſed to deny the exiſtence, or queſtion the authenticity, of our moral feelings. In the celebrated diſpute concerning liberty and neceſſity, the advocates for the latter have either maintained, that we have no ſenſe of moral liberty; or, granting that we have ſuch a ſenſe, have endeavoured to prove it deceitful. Now, if we be conſcious, that we have a ſenſe of moral liberty, it is certainly as abſurd to argue againſt the exiſtence of that ſenſe, as againſt the reality of any other matter of fact. And if the real exiſtence of that ſenſe be acknowledged, it cannot be proved to be deceitful by any arguments which may not alſo be applied to prove every power of our nature deceitful, and, conſequently, to ſhow, that man ought not to believe any thing at all. But more of this afterwards.

We have no other direct evidence than this of conſciouſneſs, or internal ſenſation, for the exiſtence and identity of our own ſoul *. I exiſt;—I am the ſame being to-day

* I ſay, *direct* evidence. But there are not wanting other irrefragable, though indirect, evidences of the exiſtence of the human ſoul. Such is that which reſults from a compariſon of the known qualities of matter with the phenomena of animal motion and thought. The further we carry our inquiries into matter, the more we are convinced of its incapacity to begin motion. And as to thought, and its ſeveral modes, if we think that they *might* be produced by any poſſible configuration and arrangement of the minute particles of matter, we form a ſuppoſition as arbitrary, as little warranted by experience or evidence of any kind, and as contrary to the rules that determine us in all our rational conjectures, as if we were to ſuppoſe, that diamonds *might* be produced from the ſmoke of a candle, or that men *might* grow like muſhrooms out of the earth. There muſt then, in all animals, and eſpecially in man, be a principle, not only diſtinct and different from body, but in ſome reſpects of a quite contrary nature. To aſk, whether the Deity, without uniting body with ſpirit, could create thinking matter, is juſt ſuch a queſtion, as, whether he could create a being eſſentially active and eſſentially inactive, capable of beginning motion, and at the ſame time incapable of beginning motion: queſtions, which, if we allow experience to be a rational ground of knowledge, we need not ſcruple to anſwer in the negative. For theſe queſtions, according to the beſt lights that our rational faculties can afford, ſeem to us to refer to the production of an effect as truly impoſſible, as the creation of round ſquareneſs, hot cold, black whiteneſs, or true falſehood.

Yet I am inclined to think, it is not by this argument that the generality of mankind are led to acknowledge the exiſtence of their own minds. An evidence more direct, much more obvious, and not leſs convincing, every man diſcovers in the

day I was yeſterday, and twenty years ago;——this principle, or being, within me, that

the inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of nature. We perceive the exiſtence of our ſouls by intution; and this I believe is the only way in which the vulgar perceive it. But their conviction is not on that account the weaker; on the contrary, they would account the man mad who ſhould ſeem to entertain any doubts on this ſubject.

One of the firſt thoughts that occur to Milton's Adam, when "new-waked from ſoundeſt ſleep," is to inquire after the cauſe of his exiſtence:

"Thou ſun, ſaid I, fair light!
"And thou, enlighten'd earth, ſo freſh and gay!
"Ye hills, and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
"And, ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
"Tell, if ye ſaw, how came I thus, how here:
"Not of myſelf; by ſome great Maker then,
"In goodneſs and in power pre-eminent.
"Tell me, how I may know him, how adore,
"From whom I have, that thus I move and live,
"And feel that I am happier than I know."

Paradiſe Loſt, viii. 273.

Of the reality of his own life, motion, and exiſtence, it is obſervable that he makes no queſtion; and indeed it would have been ſtrange if he had. But Dryden, in his opera called *The ſtate of Innocence*, would needs attempt an improvement on this paſſage; and to make ſurer work, obliges Adam to prove his exiſtence by argument, before he allows him to enter upon any other inquiry:

"What am I? or from whence?—For that I am
"I know, *becauſe I think*: but whence I came,
"Or how this frame of mine began to be,
"What other being can diſcloſe to me?"

Act 2. *ſcene* 1.

Dryden, it ſeems, had read Des Cartes; but Milton had ſtudied nature: Accordingly Dryden ſpeaks like a metaphyſician, Milton like a poet and philoſopher.

that thinks and acts, is one permanent and individual principle, distinct from all other principles, beings, or things;——these are dictates of internal sensation natural to man, and universally acknowledged: and they are of so great importance, that while we doubt of their truth, we can hardly be interested in any thing else whatsoever. If I were to believe with Mr. HUME, and some others, that my mind is perpetually changing, so as to become every different moment a different thing, the remembrance of past, or the anticipation of future good or evil, could give me neither pleasure nor pain; yea, though I were to believe, that a cruel death would certainly overtake me within an hour, I should be no more concerned, than if I were told, that a certain elephant, three thousand years hence, would be sacrificed on the top of Mount Atlas. To a man who doubts the individuality or identity of his own mind, virtue, truth, religion, good and evil, hope and fear, are absolutely nothing.

Metaphysicians have taken some pains to confound our notions on the subject of identity; and, by establishing the currency of certain ambiguous phrases, have succeeded so well, that it is now hardly possible for us to explain these dictates of our nature, accord-

according to common ſenſe and common experience, in ſuch language as ſhall be liable to no exception. The misfortune is, that many of the words we muſt uſe, though extremely well underſtood, are either too ſimple or too complex in their meaning, to admit a logical definition; ſo that the caviller is never at a loſs for an evaſive reply to any thing we may advance. But I will take it upon me to affirm, that there are hardly any human notions more clearly, or more univerſally underſtood, than thoſe we entertain concerning the identity both of ourſelves and of other things, however difficult we may ſometimes find it to expreſs thoſe notions in proper words. And I will alſo venture to affirm, that the ſentiments of the generality of mankind on this head are grounded on ſuch evidence, that he who refuſes to be convinced by it, acts irrationally, and cannot, conſiſtently with ſuch refuſal, believe any thing.

1. The exiſtence of our own mind, as ſomething different and diſtinct from the body, is univerſally acknowledged. I ſay univerſally; having never heard of any nation of men upon earth, who did not, in their converſation and behaviour, ſhow, by the plaineſt ſigns, that they made this diſtinction. Nay, ſo ſtrongly are mankind

im-

impreſſed with it, that the rudeſt barbarians, by their incantations, their funeral ſolemnities, their traditions concerning inviſible beings, and their hopes and opinions of a future ſtate, ſeem to declare, that to the exiſtence of the ſoul the body is not, in their opinion neceſſary. All philoſophers, a few Epicureans and Pyrrhoniſts excepted, have acknowledged the exiſtence of the ſoul, as one of the firſt and moſt unexceptionable principles of human ſcience. Now whence could a notion ſo univerſal ariſe? Let us examine our own minds, and we ſhall find, that it could ariſe from nothing but conſciouſneſs, a certain irreſiſtible perſuaſion, that we have a ſoul diſtinct from the body. The evidence of this notion is intuitive; it is the evidence of internal ſenſe. Reaſoning can neither prove nor diſprove it. DES CARTES, and his diſciple MALEBRANCHE, acknowledge, that the exiſtence of the human ſoul muſt be believed by all men, even by thoſe who can bring themſelves to doubt of every thing elſe.

Mr. Simon Browne *, a learned and pious clergyman of the laſt age, is perhaps the only perſon on record of whom there is reaſon to think, that he ſeriouſly diſbelieved the

* See his affecting ſtory in the Adventurer, vol. 3. No. 88.

the exiſtence of his own ſoul. He imagined, that in conſequence of an extraordinary interpoſition of divine power, his rational ſoul was gradually annihilated, and that nothing was now left him, but a principle of animal life, which he held in common with the brutes. But wherever the ſtory of this excellent perſon is known, his unhappy miſtake will be imputed to madneſs, and to a depravation of intellect, as real, and as extraordinary, as if he had diſbelieved the exiſtence of his body, or the axioms of mathematics.

2. That the thinking principle, which we believe to be within us, continues the ſame through life, is equally ſelf-evident, and equally agreeable to the univerſal conſent of mankind. If a man were to ſpeak and act in the evening, as if he believed himſelf to have become a different perſon ſince the morning, the whole world would pronounce him in a ſtate of inſanity. Were we to attempt to disbelieve our own identity, we ſhould labour in vain; we could as eaſily bring ourſelves to believe, that it is poſſible for the ſame thing to be and not to be. But there is no reaſon to think, that this attempt was ever made by any man, not even by Mr. HUME himſelf; though that author, in his Treatiſe of Human Nature,

ture, has asserted, yea, and proved too, (according to his notions of proof,) that the human soul is perpetually changing; being nothing but "a bundle of perceptions, that "succeed each other with inconceivable ra-"pidity, and are (as he chuses to express it) "in a perpetual flux *." He might as easily, and as decisively, with equal credit to his own understanding, and with equal advantage to the reader, by a method of reasoning no less philosophical, and with the same degree of discretion in the use of words, have attacked the axioms of mathematics, and produced a formal and serious confutation of them. In explaining the evidence on which we believe our own identity, it is not necessary that I should here examine his arguments against that belief; first, because the point in question is self-evident; and therefore all reasoning on the other side unphilosophical and irrational: and, secondly, because I shall afterwards prove, that some of Mr. HUME's first principles are inconceivable and impossible; and that this very notion of his concerning identity, when fairly stated, is absurd and self-contradictory.

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 438, &c.

It

It has been asked, how we can pretend to have full evidence of our identity, when of identity itſelf we are ſo far from having a diſtinct notion, that we cannot define it. It might with as good reaſon be asked, how we come to believe that two and two are equal to four, or that a circle is different from a triangle, if we cannot define either equality or diverſity;—why we believe in our own exiſtence, ſince we cannot define exiſtence:—why, in a word, the vulgar believe any thing at all, ſince they know nothing about the rules of definition, and hardly ever attempt it. In fact, we have numberleſs ideas that admit not of definition, and yet concerning which we may argue, and believe, and know, with the utmoſt clearneſs and certainty. To define heat or cold, identity or diverſity, red or white, an ox or an aſs, would puzzle all the logicians on earth; yet nothing can be clearer, or more certain, than many of our judgments concerning thoſe objects. The rudeſt of the vulgar know moſt perfectly what they mean, when they ſay, Three months ago I was at ſuch a town, and have ever ſince been at home: and the conviction they have of the truth of this propoſition is founded on the beſt of evidence, namely, on that of internal ſenſe; in which all men, by the law of their

their nature, do and muſt implicitly believe.

It has been asked, whether this continued conſciouſneſs of our being always the ſame, does not conſtitute our ſameneſs or identity. No more, I ſhould anſwer, than our perception of truth, light, or cold, is the efficient cauſe of truth, light, or cold. Our identity is perceived by conſciouſneſs; but conſciouſneſs is as different from identity, as the underſtanding is different from truth, as paſt events are different from memory, as colours from the power of ſeeing. Conſciouſneſs of identity is ſo far from conſtituting identity, that it preſuppoſes it. An animal might continue the ſame being, and yet not be conſcious of its identity; which is probably the caſe with many of the brute creation; nay, which is often the caſe with man himſelf. When we ſleep without dreaming, or fall into a fainting fit*, or rave in a fever, and often too in our

* The following caſe, which M. Crozaz gave in to the Academy of Sciences, is the moſt extraordinary inſtance of interrupted conſciouſneſs I have ever heard of. A nobleman of Lauſanne, as he was giving orders to a ſervant, ſuddenly loſt his ſpeech and all his ſenſes. Different remedies were tried without effect for ſix months; during all which time he appeared to be in a deep ſleep, or deliquium, with various ſymptoms at different periods, which are particularly ſpecified in the

our ordinary dreams, we loſe all ſenſe of our identity, and yet never conceive that our identity has ſuffered any interruption or change: the moment we awake or recover, we are conſcious that we are the ſame individual beings we were before.

Many doubts and difficulties have been ſtarted about our manner of conceiving identity of perſon under a change of ſubſtance. Plutarch tells us, that in the time of Demetrius Phalereus, the Athenians ſtill preſerved the cuſtom of ſending every year to Delos the ſame galley which, about a thouſand years before, had brought Theſeus and his company

the narration. At laſt, after ſome chirurgical operations, at the end of ſix months his ſpeech and ſenſes were ſuddenly reſtored. When he recovered, the ſervant to whom he had been giving orders when he was firſt ſeized with the diſtemper, happening to be in the room, he asked whether he had executed his commiſſion; not being ſenſible, it ſeems, that any interval of time, except, perhaps a very ſhort one, had elapſed during his illneſs. He lived ten years after, and died of another diſeaſe. See *L'Hiſtoire de l'Academie Royale des Sciences, pour l'année*, 1719, *p.* 28. Van Swieten alſo relates this ſtory in his commentaries on Boerhaave's Aphoriſms, under the head *Apoplexy*. I mention it chiefly with a view to the reader's amuſement; he may conſider the evidence, and believe or diſbelieve as he pleaſes. But that conſciouſneſs may be interrupted by a total deliquium, without any change in our notions of our own identity, I know by my own experience. I am therefore fully perſuaded, that the identity of this ſubſtance, which I call my ſoul, may continue even when I am unconſcious of it; and if for a ſhorter ſpace, why not for a longer?

pany from Crete; and that it then uſed to be a queſtion in the ſchools, how this could be the ſame veſſel, when every part of its materials had been changed oftner than once*. It is aſked, how a tree can be accounted the ſame, when, from a plant of an inch long, it has grown to the height of fifty feet; and how identity can be aſcribed to the human body, ſince its parts are continually changing, ſo that not one particle of the body I now have, belonged to the body I had twenty years ago.

It were well, if metaphyſicians would think more and ſpeak leſs on theſe ſubjects: they would then find, that the difficulties ſo much complained of are rather verbal than real. Was there a ſingle Athenian, who did not know in what reſpects the galley of Theſeus continued the ſame, and in what reſpects it was changed? It was the ſame in reſpect of its name, its deſtination, its ſhape perhaps, and ſize, and ſome other particulars; in reſpect of its ſubſtance, it was altogether different. And when one party in the ſchools maintained, that it was the ſame, and the other, that it was not the ſame, all the difference between them was this, that the one uſed

* Plutarch, in Theſeo. Plato, in Phædone.

uſed the word *ſame* in one ſenſe, and the other in another.

The identity of vegetables is as eaſily conceived. No man imagines, that the plant of an inch long is the ſame in ſubſtance with the tree of fifty feet. The latter is by the vulgar ſuppoſed to retain all the ſubſtance of the former, but with the addition of an immenſe quantity of adventitious matter. Thus far, and no further, do they ſuppoſe the ſubſtance of the tree to continue the ſame. They call it, however, the ſame tree; and the ſame it is, in many reſpects, which to every perſon of common ſenſe are obvious enough, though not eaſily expreſſed in unexceptionable language.

Of the changes made in the human body by attrition, the vulgar have no notion. They believe the ſubſtance of a full-grown body to continue the ſame, notwithſtanding its being ſometimes fatter, and ſometimes leaner; even as they ſuppoſe the ſubſtance of a wall to be the ſame before and after it is plaiſtered, or painted. They therefore do not aſcribe to it identity of perſon, and diverſity of ſubſtance, but a real and proper identity both of ſubſtance and perſon. Of the identity of the body while increaſing in ſtature, they conceive, nearly in the ſame way, as of the

the identity of vegetables: they know in what reſpects it continues the ſame, and in what reſpects it becomes different; there is no confuſion in their notions; they never ſuppoſe it to be different in thoſe reſpects in which they know it to be the ſame.

When philoſophers ſpeak of the identity of the human body, they muſt mean, not that its ſubſtance is the ſame, for this they ſay is perpetually changing; but that it is the ſame, in reſpect of its having been all along animated with the ſame vital and thinking principle, diſtinguiſhed by the ſame name, marked with the ſame or ſimilar features, placed in the ſame relations of life, &c.—— It muſt be obvious to the intelligent reader, that the difficulties attending this ſubject ariſe not from any ambiguity or intricacy in our notions or judgments, for theſe are extremely clear, but from our way of expreſſing them: the particulars in which an object continues the ſame, are often ſo blended with thoſe in which it has become different, that we cannot find proper words for marking the diſtinction, and therefore muſt have recourſe to tedious and obſcure circumlocutions.

But whatever judgments we form of the identity of corporeal objects, we cannot from them draw any inference concerning the

the identity of our mind. We cannot aſcribe extenſion or ſolidity to the ſoul, far leſs any increaſe or diminution of ſolid or extended parts. Here, therefore, there is no ground for diſtinguiſhing diverſity of ſubſtance from identity of perſon. Our ſoul is the very ſame being now it was yeſterday, laſt year, twenty years ago. This is a dictate of common ſenſe, an intuitive truth, which all mankind, by the law of their nature, do and muſt believe, and the contrary of which is inconceivable. We have perhaps changed many of our principles; we may have acquired many new ideas and notions, and loſt many of thoſe we once had; but that the ſubſtance, eſſence, or perſonality, of the ſoul, has ſuffered any change, increaſe, or diminution, we never have ſuppoſed, nor can ſuppoſe. New faculties have perhaps appeared, with which we were formerly unacquainted; but theſe we cannot conceive to have affected the identity of the ſoul, any more than learning to write, or to play on a muſical inſtrument, is conceived to affect the identity of the hand; or than the perception of harmony the firſt time one hears muſic, is conceived to affect the identity of the ear *.

* I beg leave to quote a few lines from an excellent poem, written

But if we perceive our identity by conſciouſneſs, and if the acts of conſciouſneſs by which we perceive it be interrupted, how can we know that our identity is not interrupted? I anſwer, The law of our nature determines us, whether we will or not, to believe that we continue the ſame thinking beings. The interruption of conſciouſneſs, whether more or leſs frequent, makes no change in this belief. My perception of the viſible creation is every moment interrupted by the winking of my eyes. Am I therefore to believe, that the viſible univerſe, which I this moment perceive, is not the ſame with the viſible univerſe I perceived laſt moment? Then muſt I alſo believe, that the exiſtence of

written by an author, whoſe genius and virtue were an honour to his country, and to human nature:

"Am I but what I ſeem, mere fleſh and blood,
"A branching channel, and a mazy flood?
"The purple ſtream, that through my veſſels glides,
"Dull and unconſcious flows like common tides.
"The pipes, through which the circling juices ſtray,
"Are not that thinking I, no more than they.
"This frame compacted with tranſcendent ſkill,
"Of moving joints, obedient to my will,
"Nurſed from the fruitful glebe like yonder tree,
"Waxes and waſtes: I call it MINE not ME.
"New matter ſtill the mouldering maſs ſuſtains;
"The manſion changed, the tenant ſtill remains,
"And, from the fleeting ſtream repair'd by food,
"Diſtinct, as is the ſwimmer from the flood."

ARBUTHNOT. See *Dodſley's Collection, vol.* 1. *p.* 180.

of the univerſe depends on the motion of my eye-lids; and that the muſcles which move them have the power of creating and annihilating worlds.

To conclude: That our ſoul exiſts, and continues through life the ſame individual being, is a dictate of common ſenſe; a truth which the law of our nature renders it impoſſible for us to diſbelieve; and in regard to which, we cannot ſuppoſe ourſelves in an error, without ſuppoſing our faculties fallacious, and conſequently diſclaiming all conviction, and all certainty, and diſavowing the diſtinction between truth and falſhood.

SECTION IV.

Of the Evidence of Memory.

THE evidence of memory commands our belief as effectually as that of ſenſe. I cannot poſſibly doubt, with regard to any of my tranſactions of yeſterday which I now remember, whether I performed them or not. That I dined to-day, and was in bed laſt night, is as certain to me, as that I at preſent ſee the colour of this paper. If we had no memory, knowledge and expe-

rience would be impoſſible; and if we had any tendency to diſtruſt our memory, knowledge and experience would be of as little uſe in directing our conduct and ſentiments, as our dreams now are. Sometimes we doubt, whether in a particular caſe we exert memory or imagination; and our belief is ſuſpended accordingly: but no ſooner do we become conſcious, that we *remember*, than conviction inſtantly takes place; we ſay, I am certain it was ſo, for now I remember I was an eye-witneſs.

But who is it that teaches the child to believe, that yeſterday he was puniſhed, becauſe he remembers to have been puniſhed yeſterday? Or, by what argument will you convince him, that, notwithſtanding his remembrance, he ought not to believe that he was puniſhed yeſterday, becauſe memory is fallacious? The matter depends not on education or reaſoning. We truſt to the evidence of memory, becauſe we cannot help truſting to it. The ſame Providence that endued us with memory, without any care of ours, endued us alſo with an inſtinctive propenſity to believe in it, previouſly to all reaſoning and experience. Nay, all reaſoning ſuppoſes the teſtimony of memory to be authentic: for, without truſting implicitly to this teſtimony, no train of reaſoning could

could be proſecuted; we could never be convinced, that the concluſion is fair, if we did not *remember* the ſeveral ſteps of the argument, and if we were not certain that this remembrance is not fallacious.

The diverſities of memory in different men are very remarkable; and in the ſame man the remembrance of ſome things is more laſting, and more lively, than that of others. Some of the ideas of memory ſeem to decay gradually by length of time; ſo that there may be ſome things which I diſtinctly remembered ſeven years ago, but which at preſent I remember very imperfectly, and which in ſeven years more (if I live ſo long) I ſhall have utterly forgotten. Hence ſome have been led to think, that the evidence of memory decays gradually, from abſolute certainty, through all the degrees of probability, down to that ſuſpenſe of judgment which we call *doubt*. They ſeem to have imagined, that the vivacity of the idea is in ſome ſort neceſſary to the eſtabliſhment of belief. Nay, one author * has gone ſo far as to ſay, that belief is nothing elſe but this vivacity of ideas; as if we never believed what we have no lively conception of, nor doubted of

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 1

of any thing of which we have a lively conception. But this doctrine is so absurd, that it hardly deserves a serious confutation. I have a much more lively idea of Don Quixote than of the present King of Prussia; and yet I believe that the latter does exist, and that the former never did. When I was a schoolboy, I read an abridgment of the history of Robinson Crusoe, and believed every word of it; since I grew up, I have read that ingenious work at large, and consequently have a much livelier conception of it than before; yet now I believe the whole to be a fiction. Some months ago I read *the Treatise of Human Nature*, and have at present a pretty clear remembrance of its contents; but I shall probably forget the greater part in a short time. When this happens, I ought not, according to Mr. HUME's theory, to believe that I ever read it. As long, however, as my faculties remain unimpaired, I fear I shall hardly be able to bring myself to this pitch of scepticism. No, no; I shall ever have good reason to remember my having read that book, however imperfect my remembrance may be, and however little ground I may have to congratulate myself upon my acquaintance with it.

The vivacity of a perception does not ſeem neceſſary to our belief of the exiſtence of the thing perceived. I ſee a town afar off; its viſible magnitude is not more than an inch ſquare, and therefore my perception of it is neither lively nor diſtinct; and yet I as certainly believe that town to exiſt, as if I were in the centre of it. I ſee an object in motion on the top of yonder hill; I cannot diſcern whether it be a man, or a horſe, or both; I therefore exert no belief in regard to the claſs or ſpecies of objects to which it belongs, but I believe with as much aſſurance that it exiſts, as if I ſaw it diſtinctly in all its parts and dimenſions. We have never any doubt of the exiſtence of an object ſo long as we are ſure that we perceive it by our ſenſes, whether the perception be ſtrong or weak, diſtinct or confuſed; but whenever we begin to doubt, whether the object be perceived by our ſenſes, or whether we only imagine that we perceive it, then we likewiſe begin to doubt of its exiſtence.

Theſe obſervations are applicable to memory. I ſaw a certain object ſome years ago; my remembrance of it is leſs diſtinct now than it was the day after I ſaw it; but I believe the evidence of my memory as much at preſent as I did then, in regard

to

to all the parts of it which I now am conſcious that I remember. Let a paſt event be ever ſo remote in time, if I am conſcious that I remember it, I ſtill believe, with equal aſſurance, that this event did once take place. For what is memory, but a conſciouſneſs of our having formerly done or perceived ſomething? And if it be true, that ſomething is perceived or done at this preſent moment, it will always be true, that at this moment that thing was perceived or done. The evidence of memory does not decay in proportion as the ideas of memory become leſs lively; as long as we are conſcious that we *remember*, ſo long will the evidence attending that remembrance produce abſolute certainty; and abſolute certainty admits not of degrees. Indeed, as was already obſerved, when remembrance becomes ſo obſcure, that we are at a loſs to determine whether we *remember* or only *imagine* an event,—in this caſe belief will be ſuſpended till we become certain whether we remember or not; whenever we become certain that we do remember, conviction inſtantly ariſes.

Some have ſuppoſed that the evidence of memory is liable to become uncertain, becauſe we are not well enough acquainted with the difference between memory and imagination, to be able at all times to determine,

mine, whether the one or the other be exerted in regard to the events or facts we may have occaſion to contemplate. "You ſay, that "while you only imagine an event, you neither believe nor diſbelieve the exiſtence or "reality of it: but that as ſoon as you become conſcious that you remember it, you "inſtantly believe it to have been real. You "muſt then know with certainty the difference between memory and imagination, "and be able to tell by what marks you diſtinguiſh the operations of the former from "thoſe of the latter. If you cannot do this, "you may miſtake the one for the other, and "think that you *imagine* when you really "*remember*, and that you *remember* when you "only *imagine*. That belief, therefore, muſt "be very precarious and uncertain, which is "built upon the evidence of memory, ſince "this evidence is ſo apt to be confounded "with the viſionary exhibitions of imagination, which, by your own acknowledgment, "can never conſtitute a foundation for true "rational belief." This is an objection according to the metaphyſical mode, which, without conſulting experience, is ſatisfied if a few plauſible words can be put together in the form of an argument: but this objection will have no credit with thoſe who acknowledge ultimate inſtinctive principles

ciples of conviction, and who have more faith in their own feelings than in the ſubtleties of logic.

It is certain the vulgar are not able to give a ſatisfactory account of the difference between memory and imagination; even philoſophers have not always ſucceeded in their attempts to illuſtrate this point. Mr. HUME tells us, that ideas of memory are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of imagination by the ſuperior vivacity of the former*. This may ſometimes, but cannot always, be true: for ideas of imagination are often miſtaken for objects of ſenſe; ideas of memory never. The former, therefore, muſt often be more lively than the latter; for, according to Mr. HUME's own account, all ideas are weaker than impreſſions, or informations of ſenſe†. Dreaming perſons, lunatics, ſtage-players, enthuſiaſts, and all who are agitated by fear, or other violent paſſions, are apt to miſtake ideas of imagination for real things, and the perception of thoſe ideas for real ſenſation. And the ſame thing is often experienced by perſons of ſtrong fancy, and great ſenſibility of temper, at a time when they are not troubled with any fits of irrationality or violent paſſion.

But

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 153.
† Ibid. p. 41.

But whatever difficulty we may find in defining or describing memory, so as to distinguish it from imagination, we are never at any loss about our own meaning, when we speak of remembering and of imagining. We all know what it is to remember, and what it is to imagine: a retrospect to former experience always attends the exertions of memory; but those of imagination are not attended with any such retrospect. "I remember to have seen a lion, and I can imagine an elephant or centaur, which I have never seen:"—Every body who uses these words knows very well what they mean, whether he be able to explain his meaning by other words or not. The truth is, that when we remember, we generally know that we remember; when we imagine, we generally know that we imagine*: such is our constitution. We therefore do not suppose the evidence of memory uncertain, notwithstanding that we may be at a loss to explain the difference between that faculty and imagination: this difference is perfectly known to every man by experience, though perhaps no man can fully express it in words. There are

* In dreams indeed this is not the case; but the delusions of dreaming, notwithstanding our frequent experience of them, are never supposed to affect in the least degree either the veracity of our faculties, or the certainty of our knowledge. See below, Part II. Chap. 2. Sect. 2.

are many things very familiar to us, which we have no words to expreſs. I cannot deſcribe or define, either a red colour, which I know to be a ſimple object, or a white colour, which I know to be a compoſition of ſeven colours: but will any one hence infer, that I am ignorant of their difference, ſo as not to know, when I look on ermine, whether it be white or red? Let it not then be ſaid, that becauſe we cannot define memory and imagination, therefore we are ignorant of their difference: every perſon of a ſound mind, knows their difference, and can with certainty determine, when it is that he exerts the one, and when it is that he exerts the other.

SECT. V.

Of Reaſoning from the Effect to the Cauſe.

I Left my chamber an hour ago, and now at my return find a book on the table, the ſize, and binding, and contents of which are ſo remarkable, that I am certain it was not here when I went out; and that I never ſaw it before. I aſk, who brought this book; and am told, that no body has entered

tered my apartment ſince I left it. That, ſay I, is *impoſſible*. I make a more particular inquiry; and a ſervant, in whoſe veracity I can confide, aſſures me, that he has had his eye on my chamber-door the whole day, and that no perſon has entered it but myſelf only. Then, ſay I, the perſon who brought this book muſt have come in by the window or the chimney; for it is *impoſſible* that this book could have come hither of itſelf. The ſervant bids me remember, that my chimney is too narrow to admit any human creature, and that the window is ſecured on the inſide in ſuch a manner that it cannot be opened from without. I examine the walls; it is evident no breach has been made; and there is but one door to the apartment. What ſhall I think? If the ſervant's report be true, and if the book have not been brought by any viſible agent, it muſt have come in a miraculous manner, by the interpoſition of ſome inviſible cauſe; for ſtill I muſt repeat, that without ſome cauſe it *could not poſſibly* have come hither.

Let the reader conſider the caſe, and deliberate with himſelf whether I think irrationally on this occaſion, or expreſs myſelf too ſtrongly, when I ſpeak of the *impoſſibility* of a book appearing in my chamber without ſome cauſe of its appearance, either

either viſible or inviſible. I would not willingly refer ſuch a phenomenon to a miracle; but ſtill a miracle is poſſible; whereas it is abſolutely impoſſible that this could have happened without a cauſe; at leaſt it ſeems to me to be as real an impoſſibility, as that a part ſhould be greater than the whole, or that things equal to one and the ſame thing ſhould be unequal to one another. And I preſume the reader will be of my opinion; for, in all my intercourſe with others, and after a careful examination of my own mind, I have never found any reaſon to think, that it is poſſible for a human, or for a rational creature, to conceive a thing beginning to exiſt, and proceeding from no cauſe.

I pronounce it therefore to be an axiom, clear, certain, and undeniable, That "whatever beginneth to exiſt, proceedeth from "ſome cauſe." I cannot bring myſelf to think, that the reverſe of any geometrical axiom is more abſurd than the reverſe of this; and therefore I am as certain of the truth of this, as I can be of the truth of the other; and cannot, without contradicting myſelf, and doing violence to my nature, even attempt to believe otherwiſe.

Whether this maxim be intuitive or demonſtrable, may perhaps admit of ſome diſpute; but the determination of that point will

will not in the leaſt affect the truth of the maxim. If it be demonſtrable, we can then aſſign a reaſon for our belief of it: if it be intuitive, it is on the ſame footing with other intuitive axioms; that is, we believe it, becauſe the law of our nature renders it impoſſible for us to diſbelieve it.

In proof of this maxim it has been ſaid, that nothing can produce itſelf. But this truth is not more evident than the truth to be proved, and therefore is no proof at all. Nay, this laſt propoſition ſeems to be only a different, and leſs proper, way of expreſſing the ſame thing: — Nothing can produce itſelf; — that is, every thing produced, muſt be produced by ſome other thing; — that is, every effect muſt proceed from a cauſe; — and that is, (for all effects being poſterior to their cauſes, muſt neceſſarily have a beginning) "every thing beginning "to exiſt proceeds from ſome cauſe." Other arguments have been offered in proof of this maxim, which I think are ſufficiently confuted by Mr. HUME, in his Treatiſe of Human Nature*. This maxim therefore he affirms, and I allow, to be not demonſtrably certain. But he further affirms, that it is not intuitively certain; in which I cannot

* Book 1. part 3. ſect. 3.

not agree with him. "All certainty," ſays he, "ariſes from the compariſon of "ideas, and from the diſcovery of ſuch re-"lations as are unalterable ſo long as the "ideas continue the ſame: but the only re-"lations * of this kind are reſemblance, "proportion in quantity and number, de-"grees of any quality, and contrariety; "none of which is implied in the maxim, "*Whatever begins to exiſt, proceeds from ſome* "*cauſe:*—that maxim therefore is not in-"tuitively certain."—This argument, if it prove any thing at all, would prove, that the maxim is not even certain; for we are here told, that it has not that character or quality from which all certainty ariſes.

But, if I miſtake not, both the premiſes of this ſyllogiſm are falſe. In the firſt place, I cannot admit, that all certainty ariſes from a compariſon of ideas. I am certain of the exiſtence of myſelf, and of the other things that affect my ſenſes; I am certain, that "whatever is, is;" and yet I cannot conceive, that any compariſon of ideas is neceſſary

* There are, according to Mr. HUME, ſeven different kinds of philoſophical relation, to wit, Reſemblance, Identity, Relations of time and place, Proportion in quantity or number, Degrees in any common quality, Contrariety, and Cauſation. And by the word *Relation* he here means, that particular circumſtance in which we may think proper to compare ideas. See *Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 32.

ceſſary to produce theſe convictions in my mind. Perhaps I cannot ſpeak of them without uſing words expreſſive of relation; but the ſimple act or perception of the underſtanding by which I am conſcious of them, implies not any compariſon that I can diſcover. If it did, then the ſimpleſt intuitive truth requires proof, or illuſtration at leaſt, before it can be acknowledged as truth by the mind; which I preſume will not be found warranted by experience. Whether others are conſcious of making ſuch a compariſon, before they yield aſſent to the ſimpleſt intuitive truth, I know not; but this I know, that my mind is often conſcious of certainty where no ſuch compariſon has been made by me. I acknowledge, indeed, that no certain truth can become an object of ſcience, till it be expreſſed in words; that, if expreſſed in words, it muſt aſſume the form of a propoſition; and that every propoſition, being either affirmative or negative, muſt imply a compariſon of the thing or ſubject, with that quality or circumſtance which is affirmed or denied, to belong to, or agree with it: and therefore I acknowledge, that in ſcience all certainty may be ſaid to ariſe from a compariſon of ideas. But the generality of mankind believe many things as certain, which they never thought of ex-

preſſing in words. An ordinary man believes, that himſelf, his family, his houſe, and cattle, exiſt; but, in order to produce this belief in his mind, is it neceſſary, that he compare thoſe objects with the general idea of exiſtence or non-exiſtence, ſo as to diſcern their agreement with the one, or diſagreement with the other? I cannot think it: at leaſt, if he has ever made ſuch a compariſon, it muſt have been without his knowledge; for I am convinced, that, if we were to aſk him the queſtion, he would not underſtand us.

Secondly, I apprehend, that Mr. HUME has not enumerated all the relations which, when diſcovered, give riſe to certainty. I am certain, that I am the ſame perſon to-day I was yeſterday. Mr. HUME indeed will not allow that this is poſſible *. I cannot help it; I am certain notwithſtanding; and I flatter myſelf, there are not many perſons in the world who would think this ſentiment of mine a paradox. I ſay, then, I am certain, that I am the ſame perſon to-day I was yeſterday. Now, the relation expreſſed in this propoſition is not reſemblance, nor proportion in quantity and number, nor degrees of any common quality, nor contrariety: it

* See part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 1. of this Eſſay.

it is a relation different from all theſe; it is identity or ſameneſs.—That London is contiguous to the Thames, is a propoſition which many of the moſt ſenſible people in Europe hold to be certainly true; and yet the relation expreſſed in it is none of thoſe four which our author ſuppoſes to be the ſole proprietors of certainty. For it is not in reſpect of reſemblance, of proportion in quantity or number, of contrariety, or of degrees in any common quality, that London and the Thames are here compared, but purely in reſpect of place or ſituation.

Again, that the foregoing maxim is neither intuitively nor demonſtrably certain, our author attempts to prove from this conſideration, that we cannot demonſtrate the impoſſibility of the contrary. Nay, the contrary, he ſays, is not inconceivable: "for "we can conceive an object non-exiſtent "this moment, and exiſtent the next, with-"out joining it to the idea of a cauſe, which "is an idea altogether diſtinct and different." But this, I preſume, is not a fair ſtate of the caſe. Can we conceive a thing beginning to exiſt, and yet bring ourſelves to think that a cauſe is not neceſſary to the production of ſuch a thing? If we cannot, (I am ſure I cannot), then is the contrary of this maxim, when fairly ſtated,

found to be truly and properly inconceivable.

But whether the contrary of this maxim be inconceivable or not, the maxim itſelf may be intuitively certain. Of intuitive, as well as of demonſtrable truths, there are different kinds. It is a character of ſome, that their contraries are inconceivable: ſuch are the axioms of geometry. But of many other intuitive truths, the contraries are conceivable. "I do feel a hard body;"—"I do not "feel a hard body;"—theſe propoſitions are equally conceivable: the firſt is true, for I have a pen between my fingers; but I cannot prove its truth by argument; therefore its truth is perceived intuitively.

Thus far we have argued for the ſake of argument, and oppoſed metaphſic to metaphyſic *, in order to prove, that our author's reaſoning on the preſent ſubject is not concluſive. It is now time to enter into the merits of the cauſe, and conſider the matter philoſophically, that is, according to fact and experience. And in this way we bring it to a very ſhort iſſue. The point in diſpute is, Whether this maxim, "Whatever begins to exiſt, proceeds from ſome "cauſe," be intuitively certain? That the

* See part 3. chap. 2. of this Eſſay.

the mind naturally and neceſſarily aſſents to it without any doubt, and conſiders its contrary as impoſſible, I have already ſhewn; the maxim, therefore, is certainly true. That it cannot, by any argument, or medium of proof, be rendered more evident than it is when firſt apprehended by the mind, is alſo certain; for it is of itſelf as evident as any propoſition that can be urged in proof of it. If, therefore, this maxim be true, (as every rational being feels, and acknowledges), it is a principle of common ſenſe: we believe it, not becauſe we can give a reaſon, but becauſe, by the law of our nature, we muſt believe it.

Our opinion of the neceſſity of a cauſe to the production of every thing that has a beginning, is by Mr. HUME ſuppoſed to ariſe from obſervation and experience. It is true, that in our experience we have never found any thing beginning to exiſt, and proceeding from no cauſe; but I imagine it will not appear, that our belief of this axiom hath experience for its foundation. For let it be remarked, that ſome children, at a time when their experience is very ſcanty, ſeem to be as ſenſible of the truth of this axiom, as many perſons arrived at maturity. I do not mean, that they ever repeat it in the form of a propoſition; or that, if they were to hear it repeated in that form, they would

would inſtantly declare their aſſent to it; for a propoſition can never be rationally aſſented to, except by thoſe who underſtand the words that compoſe it: but I mean, that theſe children have a natural propenſity to inquire after the cauſe of any effect or event that engages their attention; which they would not do, if the view of an event or effect did not ſuggeſt to them, that a cauſe is neceſſary to its production. Their curioſity in aſking the reaſons and cauſes of every thing they ſee and hear, is often very remarkable, and riſes even to impertinence; at leaſt it is called ſo when one is not prepared to give them an anſwer. I have known a child to break open his drum, to ſee if he could diſcover the cauſe of its extraordinary ſound; and that at the hazard of rendering the plaything unſerviceable, and of being puniſhed for his indiſcretion. If the ardor of this curioſity were always proportioned to the extent of a child's experience, or to the care his teachers have taken to make him attentive to the dependence of effects on cauſes, we might then aſcribe it to the power of education, or to a habit contracted by experience. But every one who has had an opportunity of converſing with children, knows that this is not the caſe; and that their curioſity cannot otherwiſe

wiſe be accounted for, than by ſuppoſing it inſtinctive, and, like all other inſtincts, ſtronger in ſome minds, and weaker in others, independently on experience and education, and in conſequence of the appointment of that Being who hath been pleaſed to make one man differ from another in his intellectual accompliſhments, as well as in his features, complexion, and ſize. Nor let it be imagined, becauſe ſome children are in this reſpect more curious than others, that therefore the belief of this maxim is inſtinctive in ſome minds only: the maxim may be equally believed by all, notwithſtanding this diverſity. For do we not find a ſimilar diverſity in the genius of different *men?* Some men have a philoſophical turn of mind, and love to inveſtigate cauſes, and to have a reaſon ready on every occaſion; others are indifferent as to theſe matters, being ingroſſed by ſtudies of another kind. And yet I preſume it will be found, that the truth of this maxim is felt by every man, though perhaps many men never thought of putting it in words in the form of a propoſition.

We repeat, therefore, that this axiom is one of the principles of common ſenſe, which every rational mind does and muſt acknowledge to be true; not becauſe it can be proved, but becauſe the law of nature determines

termines us to believe it without proof, and to look upon its contrary as perfectly abſurd, impoſſible, and inconceivable.

The axiom now before us is the foundation of the moſt important argument that ever employed human reaſon; I mean that which, from the works that are created, evinces the eternal power and godhead of the Creator. That argument, as far as it reſolves itſelf into this axiom, is properly a demonſtration, being a clear deduction from a ſelf-evident principle; and therefore no man can pretend to underſtand it without feeling it to be concluſive. So that what the Pſalmiſt ſays of the athieſt is literally true, *He is a fool*; as really irrational as if he refuſed to be convinced by a mathematical demonſtration. Nay, he is more irrational; becauſe there is no truth demonſtrated in mathematics which ſo many powers of our nature conſpire to ratify, and with which the minds of the whole rational creation are ſo deeply impreſſed. The contemplation of the Divine Nature is the moſt uſeful and the moſt ennobling exerciſe in which our faculties can be engaged, and recommends itſelf to every man of ſound judgment and good taſte, as the moſt durable and moſt perfect enjoyment that can poſſibly fall to the ſhare of any created being. Sceptics may wrangle,

and

and mockers may blaſpheme; but the pious man knows by evidence too ſublime for their comprehenſion, that his affections are not miſplaced, and that his hopes ſhall not be diſappointed; by evidence which, to every ſound mind, is fully ſatisfactory; but which, to the humble and tender-hearted, is altogether overwhelming, irreſiſtable, and divine.

That many of the objects in nature have had a beginning, is obvious to our own ſenſes and memory, or confirmed by unqueſtionable teſtimony: theſe, therefore, according to the axiom we are here conſidering, muſt be believed to have proceeded from a cauſe adequate at leaſt to the effects produced. That the whole ſenſible univerſe hath to us the appearance of an effect, of ſomething which once was not, and which exiſts not by any neceſſity of nature, but by the arbitrary appointment of ſome powerful and intelligent cauſe different from and independent on it; ——— that the univerſe, I ſay, has this appearance, cannot be denied: and that it is what it appears to be, an effect; that it had a beginning, and was not from eternity, is proved by every ſort of evidence the ſubject will admit. And if ſo, we offer violence to our underſtanding, when we attempt to believe that the whole univerſe does not proceed from

from ſome cauſe; and we argue unphiloſophically and irrationally, when we endeavour to diſprove this natural and univerſal ſuggeſtion of the human mind.

It is true, the univerſe is, as one may ſay, a work *ſui generis*, altogether ſingular, and ſuch as we cannot properly compare to other works; becauſe indeed all works are comprehended in it. But that natural dictate of the mind by which we believe the univerſe to have proceeded from a cauſe, ariſes from our conſidering it as an effect; a circumſtance in which it is perfectly ſimilar to all works whatſoever. The ſingularity of the effect rather confirms (if that be poſſible) than weakens our belief of the neceſſity of a cauſe; at leaſt it makes us more attentive to the cauſe, and intereſts us more deeply in it. What is the univerſe, but a vaſt ſyſtem of works or effects, ſome of them great, and others ſmall; ſome more and ſome leſs conſiderable? If each of theſe works, the leaſt as well as the greateſt, require a cauſe for its production; is it not in the higheſt degree abſurd and unnatural to ſay, that the whole is not the effect of a cauſe?—Each link of a great chain muſt be ſupported by ſomething, but the whole chain may be ſupported by nothing:—Nothing leſs than an ounce can be a counterpoiſe to an ounce,

ounce, nothing leſs than a pound to a pound; but the wing of a gnat, or nothing at all, may be a ſufficient counterpoiſe to ten hundred thouſand pounds:—Are not theſe aſſertions too abſurd to deſerve an aſwer?

The reader, if he has the misfortune to be acquainted with Mr. HUME's *Eſſay on a particular providence and a future ſtate*, will ſee, that theſe remarks are intended as an anſwer to a very ſtrange argument there advanced againſt the belief of a Diety. "The univerſe," we are told, "is an object quite ſingular and unparallelled; no other object that has fallen "under our obſervation bears any ſimilarity "to it; neither it nor its cauſe can be comprehended under any known ſpecies; and "therefore concerning the cauſe of the univerſe we can form no rational concluſion "at all."—I appeal to any man of ſound judgment, whether that ſuggeſtion of his underſtanding, which prompts him to infer a cauſe from an effect, has any dependence upon a prior operation of his mind, by which the effect in queſtion is referred to its genus or ſpecies. When he pronounces concerning any object which he conceives to have had a beginning, that it muſt have proceeded from ſome cauſe, does this judgment neceſſarily imply any compariſon of that object with others of a like kind? If the new object were

were in every reſpect unlike to other objects, would this have any influence on his judgment? Would he not acknowledge a cauſe to be as neceſſary for the production of the moſt uncommon, as of the moſt familiar object?—If therefore I believe, that I myſelf owe my exiſtence to ſome cauſe, becauſe there is ſomething in my mind which neceſſarily determines me to this belief, I muſt alſo, for the very ſame reaſon, believe, that the whole univerſe (ſuppoſed to have had a beginning) proceeds from ſome cauſe. The evidence of both is the ſame. If I believe the firſt and not the ſecond, I believe and diſbelieve the ſame evidence at the ſame time; I believe that the very ſame ſuggeſtion of my underſtanding is both true and falſe.

Though I were to grant, that, when an object is reducible to no known genus, no rational inference can be made concerning its cauſe; yet it will not follow, that our inferences concerning the cauſe of the univerſe are irrational, ſuppoſing it reaſonable to believe that the univerſe had a beginning. If there be in the univerſe any thing which is reducible to no known genus, let it be mentioned: if there be any preſumption for the exiſtence of ſuch a thing, let the foundation of that preſumption be explained.

And,

And, if you pleaſe, I ſhall, for argument's ſake, admit, that concerning the cauſe of that particular thing, no rational concluſion can be formed. But it has never been aſſerted, that the exiſtence of ſuch a thing is either real or probable. Mr. HUME only aſſerts, that the univerſe itſelf, not any particular thing in the univerſe, is reducible to no known genus. Well then, let me aſk, What is the univerſe? A word? No; it is a vaſt collection of things.—Are all theſe things reducible to genera? Mr. HUME does not deny it.—Each of theſe things, then, if it had a beginning, muſt alſo have had a cauſe? It muſt.—What thing in the univerſe exiſts uncauſed? Nothing.—Is this a rational concluſion? So it ſeems.—It ſeems, then, that though it be rational to aſſign a cauſe to every thing in the univerſe, yet to aſſign a cauſe to the univerſe is not rational! It is ſhameful thus to trifle with words.—In fact, this argument of Mr. HUME's, ſo highly admired by its author, is no argument at all. It is founded on a diſtinction that is perfectly inconceivable. Twenty ſhillings laid on a table make a pound: though you take up theſe twenty ſhillings, yet have you not taken up the pound; you have only taken up twenty ſhillings. If the reader cannot enter into this diſtinction, he will

will never be able to conceive in what the force of Mr. HUME's argument conſiſts.

If the univerſe had a beginning, it muſt have had a cauſe. This is a ſelf-evident axiom, or at leaſt an undeniable conſequence of one. We neceſſarily aſſent to it; ſuch is the law of our nature. If we deny it, we cannot, without abſurdity, believe any thing elſe whatſoever; becauſe we at the ſame time deny the authenticity of thoſe inſtinctive ſuggeſtions which are the foundation of all truth. The Atheiſt will never be able to elude the force of this argument, till he can prove, that every thing in nature exiſts neceſſarily, independently, and from eternity.

If Mr. HUME's argument be found to turn to ſo little account, from the ſimple conſideration of the univerſe, as exiſting, and as having had a beginning, it will appear (if poſſible) ſtill more irrational, when we take a view of the univerſe, and its parts, as of works curiouſly adapted to certain ends. Their exiſtence diſplays the neceſſity of a powerful cauſe; their frame proves the cauſe to be intelligent, good, and wiſe. The meaneſt of the works of nature, (if any of Nature's works may be called mean),—the arrangement neceſſary for the production of the ſmalleſt plant, requires in the cauſe a degree of power, intel-

intelligence, and wiſdom, which infinitely tranſcends the ſublimeſt exertions of human ability. What then ſhall we ſay of the cauſe that produces an animal, a rational ſoul, a world, a ſyſtem of worlds, an univerſe? Shall we ſay, that infinite power and wiſdom are not neceſſary attributes of that univerſal cauſe, though they be neceſſary attributes of the cauſe that produces a plant? Shall we ſay, that the maker of a plant may be acknowledged to be powerful, intelligent, and wiſe; becauſe there are many other things in nature that reſemble a plant; but that we cannot rationally acknowledge the maker of the univerſe to be wiſe, powerful, or intelligent, becauſe there is nothing which the univerſe reſembles, or to which it may be compared? Can the man who argues in this manner have any meaning to his words?

For an anſwer to the other cavils thrown out by Mr. HUME, in this flimſy eſſay, againſt the divine attributes, the reader is referred to the firſt part of Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion. It needs not be matter of any ſurpriſe, that we name, on this occaſion, a book which was publiſhed before Mr. HUME's eſſay was written. With infidel writers it has long been the faſhion, (leſs frequently indeed with this author than with many others), to deliver as their own, and

and as entirely new, objections againſt religion, which have been repeatedly and unanſwerably confuted. This piece of craft gives no offence to their diſciples; theſe gentlemen, if they read at all, generally chuſing to confine their inquiries to one ſide of the controverſy: to themſelves it is a conſiderable ſaving in the articles of time and invention.

SECT VI.

Of Probable or Experimental Reaſoning.

IN all our reaſonings from the cauſe to the effect, we proceed on a ſuppoſition, and a belief, that the courſe of nature will continue to be in time to come what we experience it to be at preſent, and remember it to have been in time paſt. This preſumption of continuance is the foundation of all our judgments concerning future events; and this, in many caſes, determines our conviction as effectually as any proof or demonſtration whatſoever; although the conviction ariſing from it be different in kind from what is produced by ſtrict demonſtration, as well as from thoſe kinds of conviction that attend the evidence of ſenſe, memory,

memory, and abſtract intuition. The higheſt degree of conviction in reaſoning from cauſes to effects, is called *moral certainty*; and the inferior degrees reſult from that ſpecies of evidence which is called *probability* or *veriſimilitude*. That all men will die; that the ſun will riſe to-morrow, and the ſea ebb and flow; that ſleep will continue to refreſh, and food to nouriſh us; that the ſame articulate ſounds which to-day communicate the ideas of virtue and vice, meat and drink, man and beaſt, will to-morrow communicate the ſame ideas to the ſame perſons;—no man can doubt, without being accounted a fool. In theſe, and in all other inſtances where our experience of the paſt has been equally extenſive and uniform, our judgment concerning the future amounts to moral certainty: we believe, with full aſſurance, or at leaſt without doubt, that the ſame laws of nature which have hitherto operated, will continue to operate as long as we foreſee no cauſe to interrupt or hinder their operation.

But no perſon who attends to his own mind will ſay, that, in theſe caſes, our belief, or conviction, or aſſurance, is the effect of a proof, or of any thing like it. If reaſoning be at all employed, it is only in order to give us a clear view of our paſt ex-

perience with regard to the point in queſtion. When this view is obtained, reaſoning is no longer neceſſary; the mind, by its own innate force, and in conſequence of an irreſiſtible and inſtinctive impulſe, infers the future from the paſt, immediately, and without the intervention of any argument. The ſea has ebbed and flowed twice every day in time paſt; therefore the ſea will continue to ebb and flow twice every day in the time to come,—is by no means a logical deduction of a concluſion from premiſes *.

When our experience of the paſt has not been uniform nor extenſive, our opinion with regard to the future falls ſhort of moral certainty; and amounts only to a greater or leſs degree of perſuaſion, according to the greater or ſmaller proportion of favourable inſtances:—we ſay, ſuch an event will probably happen, ſuch another is wholly improbable. If a medicine has proved ſalutary in one inſtance, and failed in five, a phyſician would not chuſe to recommend it, except in a deſperate caſe; and would then conſider its ſucceſs as a thing rather to be wiſhed than expected. An equal number of favourable and unfavourable inſtances leave the mind in a ſtate of ſuſpenſe, without exciting the ſmallest

* This remark was firſt made by Mr. Hume. See it illuſtrated at great length in his Eſſays, part 2. ſect. 4. See alſo Dr. Campbell's Diſſertation on Miracles, p. 13, 14. Ed. 2.

eſt degree of aſſurance on either ſide, except, perhaps, what may ariſe from our being more intereſted on the one ſide than on the other. A phyſician influenced by ſuch evidence would ſay, "My patient may recover, and he may die: I am ſorry to ſay, "that the former event is not one whit more "probable than the latter." When the favourable inſtances exceed the unfavourable in number, we begin to think the future event in ſome degree probable; and more or leſs ſo, according to the ſurplus of favourable inſtances. A few favourable inſtances, without any mixture of unfavourable ones, render an event probable in a pretty high degree; but the favourable experience muſt be at once extenſive and uniform, before it can produce moral certainty.

A man brought into being at maturity, and placed in a deſert iſland, would abandon himſelf to deſpair, when he firſt ſaw the ſun ſet, and the night come on; for he could have no expectation that ever the day would be renewed. But he is tranſported with joy, when he again beholds the glorious orb appearing in the eaſt, and the heavens and the earth illuminated as before. He again views the declining ſun with apprehenſion, yet not without hope; the ſecond night is leſs diſmal than the

firſt, but is ſtill very uncomfortable on account of the weakneſs of the probability produced by one favourable inſtance. As the inſtances grow more numerous, the probability becomes ſtronger and ſtronger: yet it may be queſtioned, whether a man in theſe circumſtances would ever arrive at ſo high a degree of moral certainty in this matter, as we experience; who know, not only that the ſun has riſen every day ſince we began to exiſt, but alſo that the ſame phenomenon has happened regularly for more than five thouſand years, without failing in a ſingle inſtance. The judgment of our great epic poet appears no where to more advantage than in his eighth book; where Adam relates to the angel what paſſed in his mind immediately after his awaking into life. The following paſſage is at once tranſcendently beautiful, and philoſophically juſt:

" While thus I call'd, and ſtray'd I knew not whither,
" From where I firſt drew air, and firſt beheld
" This happy light, when anſwer none return'd,
" On a green ſhady bank, profuſe of flowers,
" Penſive I ſat me down; there gentle ſleep
" *Firſt* found me, and with ſoft oppreſſion ſeiz'd
" My drouſed ſenſe; *untroubled, though I thought*
" *I then was paſſing to my former ſtate*
" *Inſenſible, and forthwith to diſſolve* *."

Adam

Paradiſe Loſt, b. 8. l. 283.

* The beauty of theſe lines did not eſcape the elegant and judicious

Adam at this time had no experience of ſleep, and therefore could not, with any probability, expect that he was to recover from it. Its approaches were attended with feelings ſimilar to thoſe he had experienced when awaking from non-exiſtence, and would naturally ſuggeſt that idea to his mind; and as he had no reaſon to expect that his life was to continue, would intimate the probability that he was again upon the verge of an inſenſible ſtate.

Now it is evident, from what has been already ſaid, that the degree of probability muſt be intuitively perceived, or the degree of aſſurance ſpontaneouſly and inſtinctively excited in the mind, upon the bare conſideration of the inſtances on either ſide; and that without any medium of argument to connect the future event with the paſt experience. Reaſoning may be employed in bringing the inſtances into view; but when that is done, it is no longer neceſſary. And if you were to argue with a man, in order to convince him that a certain future event is not ſo improbable as he ſeems to think, you would only make him take notice of ſome favourable inſtance which he had overlooked,

judicious Addiſon; but that author does not aſſign the reaſon of his approbation. Spect. No. 345.

looked, or endeavour to render him ſuſpicious of the reality of ſome of the unfavourable inſtances; leaving it to himſelf to eſtimate the degree of probability. If he continue refractory, notwithſtanding that his view of the ſubject is the ſame with yours, he can be reaſoned with in no other way, than by your appealing to the common ſenſe of mankind.

SECT. VII.

Of Analogical Reaſoning.

REaſoning from anology, when traced up to its ſource, will be found in like manner to terminate in a certain inſtinctive propenſity, implanted in us by our Maker, which leads us to expect, that ſimilar cauſes in ſimilar circumſtances, do probably produce, or will probably produce, ſimilar effects. The probability which this kind of evidence is fitted to illuſtrate, does, like the former, admit of a vaſt variety of degrees, from abſolute doubting up to moral certainty. When the ancient philoſopher who was ſhipwrecked in a ſtrange country, diſcovered certain

certain geometrical figures drawn upon the ſand by the ſea-ſhore, he was naturally led to believe, with a degree of aſſurance not inferior to moral certainty, that the country was inhabited by men, ſome of whom were men of ſtudy and ſcience, like himſelf. Had theſe figures been leſs regular, and liker the appearance of chance-work, the preſumption from anology, of the country being inhabited, would have been weaker; and had they been of ſuch a nature as left it altogether dubious, whether they were the work of accident or of deſign, the evidence would have been too ambiguous to ſerve as a foundation for any opinion.

In reaſoning from analogy, we argue *from* a fact or thing experienced *to* ſomething ſimilar not experienced; and from our view of the former ariſes an opinion with regard to the latter; which opinion will be found to imply a greater or leſs degree of aſſurance, according as the inſtance *from* which we argue is more or leſs ſimilar to the inſtance *to* which we argue. Why the degree of our aſſurance is determined by the degree of likeneſs, we cannot tell; but we know by experience, that this is the caſe: and by experience alſo we know, that our aſſurance, ſuch as it is, ariſes immediately in the mind, whenever we fix our attention on the circumſtances in which

which the probable event is expected, ſo as to trace their reſemblance to thoſe circumſtances in which we have known a ſimilar event to take place. A child who has been burnt with a red-hot coal, is careful to avoid touching the flame of a candle; for as the viſible qualities of the latter are like to thoſe of the former, he expects, with a very high degree of aſſurance, that the effects produced by the candle operating on his fingers, will be ſimiliar to thoſe produced by the burning coal. And it deſerves to be remarked, that the judgment a child forms on theſe occaſions may ariſe, and often doth ariſe, previous to education and reaſoning, and while experience is very limited. Knowing that a lighted candle is a dangerous object, he will be ſhy of touching a glow-worm, or a piece of wet fiſh ſhining in the dark, becauſe of their reſemblance to the flame of a candle: but as this reſemblance is but imperfect, his judgment, with regard to the conſequences of touching theſe objects, will probably be more inclined to doubt, than in the former caſe, where the inſtances were more ſimilar.

Thoſe who are acquainted with aſtronomy, think it extremely probable, that the planets are inhabited by living creatures, on account of their being in all other reſpects ſo like to

our

our earth. A man who thinks them not much bigger than they appear to the eye, never dreams of ſuch a notion; for to him they ſeem in every reſpect unlike to our earth: and there is no other way of bringing him over to the aſtronomer's opinion, than by explaining to him thoſe particulars in which the planets and our earth reſemble one another. As ſoon as he comprehends theſe particulars, and this reſemblance, his mind of its own accord admits the probability of the new opinion, without being led to it by any medium of proof, connecting the facts he hath experienced with other ſimilar and probable facts lying beyond the reach of his experience. Such a proof indeed could not be given. If he were not convinced of the probability by the bare view of the facts, you would impute his perſeverance in his old opinion, either to obſtinacy, or to want of common ſenſe; two mental diſorders for which logic provides no remedy.

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

Of Faith in Teſtimony.

THere are in the world many men, whoſe declaration concerning any fact which they have ſeen, and of which they are competent judges, would engage my belief as effectually as the evidence of my own ſenſes. A metaphyſician may tell me, that this implicit confidence in teſtimony is unworthy of a philoſopher and a logician, and that my faith ought to be more rational. It may be ſo; but I believe as before notwithſtanding. And I find that all men have the ſame confidence in the teſtimony of certain perſons; and that if a man ſhould refuſe to think as other men do in this matter, he would be called obſtinate, whimſical, narrow-minded, and a fool. If, after the experience of ſo many ages, men are ſtill diſpoſed to believe the word of an honeſt man, and find no inconvenience in doing ſo, I muſt conclude, that it is not only natural, but rational, expedient, and manly, to credit ſuch teſtimony: and though I were to peruſe volumes of metaphyſic written in proof of the falability of teſtimony, I ſhould ſtill, like the reſt of the

world, believe credible teſtimony without fear of inconvenience. I know very well, that teſtimony is not admitted in proof of any doctrine in mathematics, becauſe the evidence of that ſcience is quite of a different kind. But is truth to be found in mathematics only? is the geometrician the only perſon who exerts a rational belief? do we never find conviction ariſe in our minds, except when we contemplate an intuitive axiom, or run over a mathematical demonſtration? In natural philoſophy, a ſciente not inferior to pure mathematics in the certainty of its concluſions, teſtimony is admitted as a ſufficient proof of many facts. To believe teſtimony, therefore, is agreeable to nature, to reaſon, and to ſound philoſophy.

When we believe the declaration of an honeſt man, in regard to facts of which he has had experience, we ſuppoſe, that by the view or perception of thoſe facts, his ſenſes have been affected in the ſame manner as ours would have been if we had been in his place. So that faith in teſtimony is in part reſolvable into that conviction which is produced by the evidence of ſenſe: at leaſt, if we did not believe our ſenſes, we could not, without abſurdity, believe teſtimony; if we have any tendency to doubt the evidence of ſenſe, we muſt, in regard to teſtimony, be equally

equally ſceptical. Thoſe philoſophers, therefore, who would perſuade us to reject the evidence of ſenſe, among whom are to be reckoned all who deny the exiſtence of matter, are not to be conſidered as mere theoriſts, whoſe ſpeculations are of too abſtract a nature to do any harm, but as men of the moſt dangerous principles. Not to mention the bad effects of ſuch doctrine upon ſcience in general*, I would only at preſent call upon the reader to attend to its influence upon our religious opinions and hiſtorical knowledge. Teſtimony is the grand external evidence of Chriſtianity. All the miracles wrought by our Saviour, and particularly that great deciſive miracle, his reſurrection from the dead, were ſo many appeals to the ſenſes of men, in proof of his divine miſſion: and whatever ſome unthinking cavillers may object, this we affirm to be not only the moſt proper, but the only proper, kind of external evidence, that can be employed, conſiſtently with man's free agency and moral probation, for eſtabliſhing a popular and univerſal religion among mankind. Now, if matter has no exiſtence but in our mind, our ſenſes are deceitful: and if ſo, St. Thomas muſt have been deceived when he felt, and the reſt of the

* See below, part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 2.

the apoſtles when they ſaw, the body of their Lord after his reſurrection; and all the facts recorded in hiſtory, both ſacred and civil, were no better than dreams or deluſions, with which perhaps St. Matthew, St. John, and St. Luke, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Ceſar were affected, but which they had no more ground of believing to be real, than I have of believing, in conſequence of my having dreamed it, that I was laſt night in Conſtantinople. Nay, if I admit BERKELEY's and HUME's theory, of the non-exiſtence of matter, I muſt believe, that what my ſenſes declare to be true, is not only not truth, but directly contrary to it. For does not this philoſophy teach, that what ſeems to human ſenſe to exiſt does not exiſt; and that what ſeems corporeal is incorporeal? and are not exiſtence and non-exiſtence, materiality and immateriality, contraries? Now, if men ought to believe the contrary of what their ſenſes declare to be true, the evidence of all hiſtory, of all teſtimony, and indeed of all external perception, is no longer any evidence of the reality of the facts warranted by it; but becomes, on the contrary, a proof that thoſe facts did never happen. If it be urged, as an objection to this reaſoning, that BERKELEY was a Chriſtian, notwithſtanding

ſtanding his ſcepticiſm (or paradoxical belief) in other matters; I anſwer, that though he maintained the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of body, there is no evidence that he either believed or underſtood it: nay, there is poſitive evidence that he did neither; as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhow afterwards *.

Again, when we believe a man's word, becauſe we know him to be honeſt, or, in other words, have had experience of his veracity, all reaſoning on ſuch teſtimony is ſupported by the evidence of experience, and by our preſumption of the continuance of the laws of nature: — the firſt evidence reſolves itſelf into inſtinctive conviction, and the ſecond is itſelf an inſtinctive preſumption. The principles of common ſenſe, therefore, are the foundation of all true reaſoning concerning teſtimony of this kind.

It is ſaid by Mr. HUME, in his Eſſay on Miracles, that our belief of any fact from the report of eye-witneſſes is derived from no other principle than experience; that is, from our obſervation of the veracity of human teſtimony, and of the uſual conformity of facts to the report of witneſſes. This doctrine is confuted with great elegance

* See part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 2. of this Eſſay.

elegance and preciſion, and with invincible force of argument, in Dr. Campbell's Diſſertation on Miracles. It is, indeed, like moſt of Mr. HUME's capital doctrines, directly repugnant to matter of fact: for our credulity is greateſt when our experience is leaſt; that is, when we are children; and generally grows leſs and leſs, in proportion as our experience becomes more and more extenſive: the very contrary of which muſt happen, if Mr. HUME's doctrine were true.

There is then in man a propenſity to believe teſtimony antecedent to that experience, which Mr. HUME ſuppoſes, of the conformity of facts to the report of witneſſes. But there is another ſort of experience, which may perhaps have ſome influence in determining children to believe in teſtimony. Man is naturally diſpoſed to ſpeak as he thinks; and moſt men do ſo: for the moſt egregious liars ſpeak truth a hundred times * for once that they utter falſehood. It is unnatural for human creatures to falſify; and they never think of departing from the truth, except they have ſome end to anſwer by it. Accordingly children, while their native ſimplicity remains uncorrupted, while they have no vice to diſguiſe,

* See Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the human mind, p. 474.

guiſe, no puniſhment to fear, and no artificial ſcheme to promote, do for the moſt part, if not always, ſpeak as they think: and ſo generally is their veracity acknowledged, that it has paſſed into a proverb, That children and fools tell truth. Now I am not certain, but this their innate propenſity to ſpeak truth, may in part account for their readineſs to believe what others ſpeak. They do not ſuſpect the veracity of others, becauſe they are conſcious and confident of their own. However, there is nothing abſurd or unphiloſophical in ſuppoſing, that they believe teſtimony by one law of their nature, and ſpeak truth by another. I ſeek not therefore to reſolve the former principle into the latter; I mention them for the ſake only of obſerving, that whether they be allowed to be different principles, or different effects of the ſame principle, our general doctrine remains equally clear, namely, That all reaſoning concerning the evidence of teſtimony does finally terminate in the principles of common ſenſe. This is true, as far as our faith in teſtimony is reſolvable into experimental conviction; becauſe we have already ſhown, that all reaſoning from experience is reſolvable into intuitive principles, either of certain or of probable evidence: and ſurely it is no leſs true, as far as our faith in teſtimony is itſelf inſtinctive,

tive, and ſuch as cannot be reſolved into any higher principle.

Our faith in teſtimony does often, but not always, amount to abſolute certainty. That there is ſuch a city as Conſtantinople, ſuch a country as Lapland, and ſuch a mountain as the peak of Teneriffe; that there were ſuch men as Hannibal and Julius Ceſar; that England was conquered by William the Norman; that Charles I. was beheaded;—of theſe, and ſuch like truths, every perſon acquainted with hiſtory and geography accounts himſelf abſolutely certain. When a number of perſons, not acting in concert, having no intereſt to diſguiſe the truth, and ſufficient judges of that to which they bear teſtimony, concur in making the ſame report, it would be accounted madneſs not to believe them. Nay, when a number of witneſſes, ſeparately examined, and having had no opportunity to concert a plan beforehand, do all agree in their declarations, we make no ſcruple of yielding full faith to their teſtimony, even though we have no evidence of their honeſty or ſkill; nay, though they be notorious both for knavery and folly: becauſe the fictions of the human mind being infinite, it is impoſſible that each of theſe witneſſes ſhould, by mere accident, deviſe the very ſame circumſtances; if therefore their declarations con-

cur, this is a certain proof, that there is no fiction in the caſe, and that they all ſpeak from real experience and knowledge. The inference we form on theſe occaſions is ſupported by arguments drawn from our experience; and all arguments of this ſort are reſolvable into the principles of common ſenſe. In general, it will be found true of all our reaſonings concerning teſtimony, that they are founded, either mediately or immediately, upon inſtinctive conviction or inſtinctive aſſent; ſo that he who has reſolved to believe nothing but what he can give a reaſon for, can never, conſiſtently with this reſolution, believe any thing, either as certain or as probable, upon the teſtimony of other men.

SECT IX.

Concluſion of this Chapter.

THE concluſion to which we are led by the above induction, would perhaps be admitted by ſome to be ſelf-evident, or at leaſt to ſtand in no great need of illuſtration; to others it might have been proved *a priori* in very few words; but to the greater part

part of readers, a detail of particulars may be neceſſary, in order to produce that *ſteady and well-grounded conviction* which it is our ambition to eſtabliſh.

The argument *a priori* might be comprehended in the following words. If there be any creatures in human ſhape, who deny the diſtinction between truth and falſhood, or who are unconſcious of that diſtinction, they are far beyond the reach, and below the notice, of philoſophy, and therefore have no concern in this inquiry. Whoever is ſenſible of that diſtinction, and is willing to acknowledge it, muſt confeſs, that truth is ſomething fixed and determinate, depending not upon man, but upon the Author of nature. The fundamental principles of truth muſt therefore reſt upon their own evidence, perceived intuitively by the underſtanding. If they did not, if reaſoning were neceſſary to enforce them, they muſt be expoſed to perpetual viciſſitude, and appear under a different form in every individual, according to the peculiar turn and character of his reaſoning powers. Were this the caſe, no man could know, of any propoſition, whether it were true or falſe, till after he had heard all the arguments that had been urged for and againſt it; and, even then, he could not know with certainty, whether he had heard all that could be urged: future diſputants

might overturn the former arguments, and produce new ones, to continue unanſwered for a while, and then ſubmit, in their turn, to their ſucceſſors. Were this the caſe, there could be no ſuch thing as an appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, even as in a ſtate of nature there can be no appeal to the law; every man would be "a law unto himſelf," not in morals only, but in ſcience of every kind.

We ſometimes repine at the narrow limits preſcribed to human capacity. *Hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no further,* ſeems a hard prohibition, when applied to the operations of mind. But as, in the material world, it is to this prohibition man owes his ſecurity and exiſtence; ſo, in the immaterial ſyſtem, it is to this we owe our dignity, our virtue, and our happineſs. A beacon blazing from a well-known promontory is a welcome object to the bewildered mariner; who is ſo far from repining that he has not the beneficial light in his own keeping, that he is ſenſible its utility depends on its being placed on the firm land, and committed to the care of others.

We have now proved, that "except we "believe many things without proof, we "never can believe any thing at all; for "that all ſound reaſoning muſt ultimately "reſt on the principles of common ſenſe,

"that

" that is, on principles intuitively certain, " or intuitively probable; and, conſequently, " that common ſenſe is the ultimate judge " of truth, to which reaſon muſt continu- " ally act in ſubordination *". To common ſenſe, therefore, all truth muſt be conformable; this is its fixed and invariable ſtandard. And whatever contradicts common ſenſe, or is inconſiſtent with that ſtandard, though ſupported by arguments that are deemed unanſwerable, and by names that are celebrated by all the critics, academies, and potentates on earth, is not truth, but falſhood. In a word, the dictates of common ſenſe are, in reſpect to human knowledge in general, what the axioms of geometry are in reſpect to mathematics: on the ſuppoſition that thoſe axioms are falſe or dubious, all mathematical reaſoning falls to the ground; and on the ſuppoſition that the dictates of common ſenſe are erroneous or deceitful, all ſcience, truth, and virtue are vain.

I know not but it may be urged as an objection to this doctrine, that, if we grant common ſenſe to be the ultimate judge in all diſputes, a great part of ancient and modern philoſophy becomes uſeleſs. I admit the objection with all my heart, in its full force, and with all its conſequences; and yet I muſt repeat, that if common ſenſe be ſup-

* See part 1. chap. 1. ſub. fin.

ſuppoſed fallacious, all knowledge is at an end; and that even a demonſtration of the fallacy would itſelf be fallacious and frivolous. For if the dictates of my nature deceive me in one caſe, how ſhall I know that they do not deceive me in another? When a philoſopher demonſtrates to me, that matter exiſts not but in my mind, and, independent on me and my faculties, has no exiſtence at all; before I admit his demonſtration, I muſt diſbelieve all my ſenſes, and diſtruſt every principle of belief within me: before I admit his demonſtration, I muſt be convinced, that I and all mankind are fools; that our Maker made us ſuch, and from the beginning intended to impoſe on us; and that it was not till about the ſix-thouſandth year of the world when this impoſture was diſcovered; and then diſcovered, not by a divine revelation, not by any rational inveſtigation of the laws of nature, not by any inference from previous truths of acknowledged authority, but by a pretty play of Engliſh and French words, to which the learned have given the name of metaphyſical reaſoning. Before I admit this pretended demonſtration, I muſt bring myſelf to believe what I find to be incredible; which ſeems to me not a whit leſs difficult than to perform what is impoſſible. And when all this

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is done, if it were poſſible that all this could be done, pray what is ſcience, or truth, or falſhood? Shall I believe nothing? or ſhall I believe every thing? Or am I capable either of belief, or of diſbelief? or do I exiſt? or is there ſuch a thing as exiſtence?

The end of all ſcience, and indeed of every uſeful purſuit, is to make men happier, by improving them in wiſdom and virtue. I beg leave to aſk, whether the preſent race of men owe any part of their virtue, wiſdom, or happineſs, to what metaphyſicians have written in proof of the non-exiſtence of matter, and the neceſſity of human actions? If it be anſwered, That our happineſs, wiſdom, and virtue, are not at all affected by ſuch controverſies, then I muſt affirm, that all ſuch controverſies are uſeleſs. And if it be true, that they have a tendency to promote wrangling, which of all kinds of converſation is the moſt unpleaſant, and the moſt unprofitable; or vain polemical diſquiſition, which cannot be carried on without waſte of time, and proſtitution of talents; or ſcepticiſm, which tends to make a man uncomfortable in himſelf, and unſerviceable to others:—then I muſt affirm, that all ſuch controverſies are both uſeleſs and miſchievous; and that the world would be more wiſe, more virtuous, and more happy, without

out them.—But it is ſaid, that they improve the underſtanding, and render it more capable of diſcovering truth, and detecting error. Be it ſo:—but though bars and locks render our houſes ſecure; and though acuteneſs of hearing and feeling be a valuable endowment; it will not follow, that thieves are a public bleſſing; or that the man is intitled to my gratitude, who quickens my touch and hearing, by putting out my eyes.

It is further ſaid, that ſuch controverſies make us ſenſible of the weakneſs of human reaſon, and the imperfection of human knowledge; and for the ſanguinary principles of bigotry and enthuſiaſm, ſubſtitute the milky ones of ſcepticiſm and moderation. And this is conceived to be of prodigious emolument to mankind; becauſe a firm attachment to religion, which a man may call bigotry if he pleaſes, doth often give riſe to a perſecuting ſpirit; whereas a perfect indifference about it, which ſome men are good-natured enough to call moderation, is a principle of great good-breeding, and gives no ſort of diſturbance, either in private or public life. This is a plea on which our modern ſceptics plume themſelves not a little. And who will venture to arraign the virtue or the ſagacity of theſe projectors?

tors? To accompliſh ſo great effects by means ſo ſimple; to prevent ſuch dreadful calamities by ſo innocent an artifice,---does it not diſplay the perfection of benevolence and wiſdom? Truly I can hardly imagine ſuch another ſcheme, except perhaps the following. Suppoſe a phyſician of the Sangrado ſchool, out of zeal for the intereſt of the faculty, and the public good, to prepare a bill to be laid before the parliament, in theſe words: "That whereas good health, eſpeci-
" ally when of long ſtanding, has a tenden-
" cy to prepare the human frame for acute
" and inflammatory diſtempers, which have
" been known to give extreme pain to the
" unhappy patient, and ſometimes even
" bring him to the grave; and whereas the
" ſaid health, by making us briſk, and
" hearty, and happy, is apt alſo, on ſome
" occaſions, to make us diſorderly and li-
" centious, to the great detriment of glaſs
" windows, lanthorns, and watchmen: Be
" it therefore enacted, That all the inhabi-
" tants of theſe realms, for the peace of go-
" vernment, and the repoſe of the ſubject, be
" compelled, on pain of death, to bring their
" bodies down to a conſumptive habit; and
" that henceforth no perſon preſume to walk
" abroad with a cane, on pain of having his
" head broke with it, and being ſet in the
ſtocks

" ſtocks for ſix months; nor to walk at all, " except with crutches, to be delivered at " the public charge to each perſon who " makes affidavit, that he is no longer able " to walk without them," &c.---He who can eradicate conviction from the human heart, may doubtleſs prevent all the fatal effects of enthuſiaſm and bigotry; and if all human bodies were thrown into a conſumption, I believe there would be an end of riot, as well as of inflammatory diſeaſes. Whether the inconveniences, or the remedies, be the greater grievance, might perhaps bear a queſtion. Bigotry, enthuſiaſm, and a perſecuting ſpirit, are very dangerous and deſtructive; univerſal ſcepticiſm, would, I am ſure, be equally ſo, if it were to infect the generality of mankind. But what has religion and rational conviction to do with either? Nothing more than good health has to do with acute diſtempers, and rebellious inſurrections; or than the peace of government, and tranquillity of the ſubject, have to do with a gradual decay of our muſcular fleſh. True religion tends to make men great, and good, and happy; and if ſo, its doctrines can never be too firmly believed, nor held in too high veneration. And if truth be at all attainable in philoſophy, I cannot ſee why we ſhould ſcruple to receive it as ſuch, when we have attained

attained it; nor how it can promote candour, good-breeding, and humanity, to pretend to doubt what we do and muſt believe, to profeſs to maintain doctrines of which we are conſcious that they ſhock our underſtanding, to differ in judgment from all the world except a few metaphyſical pedants, and to queſtion the evidence of thoſe principles which all other men think the moſt unqueſtionable, and moſt ſacred. Conviction and ſteadineſs of principle, is that which gives dignity, uniformity, and ſpirit, to human conduct, and without which our happineſs can neither be laſting nor ſincere. It conſtitutes, as it were, the vital ſtamina of a great and manly character; whereas ſcepticiſm betrays a weak and ſickly underſtanding, and a levity of mind, from which nothing can be expected but inconſiſtence and folly. In conjunction with ill-nature, bad taſte, and a hard heart, ſteadineſs and ſtrong conviction will doubtleſs make a bad man, and ſcepticiſm will make a worſe: but good-nature, elegant taſte, and ſenſibility of heart, when united with firmneſs of mind, become doubly reſpectable and lovely; whereas no man can act on the principles of ſcepticiſm, without incurring univerſal contempt.——But to return:

Mathe-

Mathematicians, and natural philoſophers, do in effect admit the diſtinction between common ſenſe and reaſon, as illuſtrated above; for they are content to reſt their ſciences either on ſelf-evident axioms, or on experiments warranted by the evidence of external ſenſe. The philoſophers who treat of the mind, do alſo ſometimes profeſs to found their doctrines on the evidence of ſenſe: but this profeſſion is merely verbal; for whenever experience contradicts the ſyſtem, they queſtion the authenticity of that experience, and ſhow you, by a moſt elaborate inveſtigation, that it is all a cheat. For it is eaſy to write plauſibly on any ſubject, and in vindication of any doctrine, when either the indolence of the reader, or the nature of the compoſition, gives the writer an opportunity to avail himſelf of the ambiguity of language. It is not often that men attend to the operations of the mind; and when they do, it is perhaps with ſome metaphyſical book in their hands, which they read with a reſolution to admire or deſpiſe, according as the faſhion or their humour directs them. In this ſituation, or even when they are diſpoſed to judge impartially of the writer, their attention to what paſſes in their own mind is but ſuperficial, and is very apt to be ſwayed by a ſecret bias in favour of ſome theory.

theory. And then, it is ſometimes difficult to diſtinguiſh between a natural feeling and a prejudice of education; and our deference to the opinion of a favourite author makes us think it more difficult than it really is, and very often leads us to miſtake the one for the other. Nay, the very act of ſtudying diſcompoſes our minds a little, and prevents that free play of the faculties from which alone we can judge with accuracy of their real nature.—Beſides, language, being originally intended to anſwer the obvious exigencies of life, and expreſs the qualities of matter, becomes metaphorical when applied to the operations of mind. Thus we talk metaphorically, when we ſpeak of a warm imagination, a ſound judgment, a tenacious memory, an enlarged underſtanding; theſe epithets being originally and properly expreſſive of material qualities. This circumſtance, however obvious, is not always attended to; and hence we are apt to miſtake verbal analogies for real ones, and to apply the laws of matter to the operations of mind; and thus, by the mere deluſion of words, are led into error before we are aware, and while our premiſes ſeem to be altogether unexceptionable. It is a favourite maxim with LOCKE, as it was with ſome ancient philoſophers, that the human ſoul, previous to education, is like a piece of white

white paper, or *tabula raſa*; and this ſimile, harmleſs as it may appear, betrays our great modern into ſeveral important miſtakes. It is indeed one of the moſt unlucky alluſions that could have been choſen. The human ſoul, when it begins to think, is not extended, nor inert, nor of a white colour, nor incapable of energy, nor wholly unfurniſhed with ideas, (for, if it think at all, it muſt have ſome ideas, according to LOCKE's definition of the word *), nor as ſuſceptable of any one impreſſion or character as of any other. In what reſpect then does the human ſoul reſemble a piece of white paper? To this philoſophical conundrum I confeſs I can give no ſerious anſwer.—Even when the terms we uſe are not metaphorical, the natural abſtruſeneſs of the ſubject makes them appear ſomewhat myſterious; and we are apt to conſider them as of more ſignificancy than they really are. Had Mr. HUME told the world in plain terms, that virtue is a ſpecies of vice, darkneſs a ſort of light, and exiſtence a kind of non-exiſtence, I know not what metaphyſicians might have thought of the diſ-

* The word *idea* ſerves beſt to ſtand for whatſoever is the object of the underſtanding when a man thinks.—I have uſed it to expreſs whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking.

Introduction to Eſſay on Human Underſtanding, ſect. 8.

diſcovery; but ſure I am, no reader of tolerable underſtanding would have paid him any compliments upon it *. But when he ſays, that contrariety is a mixture of cauſation and reſemblance; and, ſtill more, when he brings a formal proof of this moſt ſage remark, he impoſes on us by the ſolemnity of the expreſſion; we conclude, that "more is meant than "meets the ear;" and begin to fancy, not that the author is abſurd or unintelligible, but that we have not ſagacity enough to diſcover his meaning.

* Mr. HUME had ſaid, that the only principles of connexion among ideas are three, to wit, reſemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cauſe or effect: *Inquiry concerning Human Underſtanding, ſect.* 3. It afterwards occured to him, that contrary ideas have a tendency to introduce one another into the mind. But inſtead of adding contrariety to the liſt of connecting principles, which he ought to have done, and which would have been philoſophical, he aſſumes the metaphyſician, and endeavours to prove his enumeration right, by reſolving contrariety, as a ſpecies, into reſemblance and cauſation, as genera. "Contraſt, or contrariety," ſays he, "is a "connexion among ideas, which may perhaps be conſidered "as a mixture of cauſation and reſemblance. Where two "objects are contrary, the one deſtroys the other, *i. e.* is "the cauſe of its annihilation; and the idea of the annihilation "of an object implies the idea of its former exiſtence." Is it poſſible to make any ſenſe of this? Darkneſs and light are contrary; the one deſtroys the other, or is the cauſe of its annihilation; and the idea of the annihilation of darkneſs implies the idea of its former exiſtence. This is given as a proof, that darkneſs partly reſembles light, and partly is the cauſe of light. Indeed! But, O *ſi ſic omnia dixiſſet!* This is a harmleſs abſurdity.

meaning. It were tedious to reckon up one half of the improprieties and errors which have been introduced into the philoſophy of human nature, by the indefinite application of the words, *idea*, *impreſſion*, *perception*, *ſenſation*, &c. Nay, it is well known, that BERKELEY's pretended proof of the non-exiſtence of matter, at which common ſenſe ſtood aghaſt for many years, has no better foundation, than the ambiguous uſe of a word. He who conſiders theſe things, will not be much diſpoſed to overvalue metaphyſical truth, (as it is called) when it happens to contradict any of the natural ſentiments of mankind.

In the laws of nature, when thoroughly underſtood, there appear no contradictions: It is only in the ſyſtems of philoſophers that reaſon and common ſenſe are at variance. No man of common ſenſe ever did or could believe, that the horſe he ſaw coming toward him at full gallop, was an idea in his mind, and nothing elſe; no thief was ever ſuch a fool as to plead in his own defence, that his crime was neceſſary and unavoidable, for that man is born to pick pockets as the ſparks fly upward. When Reaſon invades the rights of common Senſe, and preſumes to arraign that authority by which ſhe herſelf acts, nonſenſe and confuſion

ſion muſt of neceſſity enſue; ſcience will ſoon come to have neither head nor tail, beginning nor end; philoſophy will grow contemptible; and its adherents, far from being treated, as in former times, upon the footing of conjurors, will be thought by the vulgar, and by every man of ſenſe, to be little better than downright fools.

PART II.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PRECEDING DOCTRINE, WITH INFERENCES.

BUT now a difficulty occurs, which it is not perhaps eaſy to ſolve. Granting what is ſaid above to be true; that all legitimate reaſoning, whether of certain or of probable evidence, does finally reſolve itſelf into principles of common ſenſe, which we muſt admit as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority; that therefore common ſenſe is the foundation and the ſtandard of all juſt reaſoning; and that the genuine ſentiments of nature are never erroneous:—yet, by what criterion ſhall we know a ſentiment of nature from a prejudice of education, a dictate of common ſenſe from the fallacy of an inveterate opinion? Muſt every principle be

be admitted as true, which we believe without being able to aſſign a reaſon? then where is our ſecurity againſt prejudice and implicit faith! Or muſt every principle that ſeems intuitively certain, or intuitively probable, be reaſoned upon, that we may know whether it be really what it ſeems? then where our ſecurity againſt the abuſe ſo much inſiſting on, of ſubjecting common ſenſe to the teſt of reaſoning!—At what point muſt reaſon ſtop in its inveſtigations, and the dictates of common ſenſe be admitted as deciſive and final?

It is much to be regretted, that this matter has been ſo little attended to: for a full and ſatisfactory diſcuſſion of it would do more real ſervice to the philoſophy of human nature, than all the ſyſtems of logic in the world; would at once exalt pneumatology to the dignity of ſcience, by ſettling it on a firm and unchangeable foundation; and would go a great way to baniſh ſophiſtry from ſcience, and rid the world of ſcepticiſm. This is indeed the grand deſideratum in logic; of no leſs importance to the moral ſciences, than the diſcovery of the longitude to navigation. That I ſhall fully ſolve this difficulty, I am not ſo vain, nor ſo ignorant, as to imagine. But I humbly hope I ſhall be able to throw ſome light on

the ſubject, and contribute a little to facilitate the progreſs of thoſe who may hereafter engage in the ſame purſuit. If I can accompliſh even this, I ſhall do a ſervice to truth, philoſophy, and mankind: if I ſhould be thought to fail, there is yet ſomething meritorious in the attempt. To have ſet the example, may be of conſequence.

I ſhall endeavour to conduct the reader to the concluſion I have come to on this ſubject, by the ſame ſteps that led me thither; a method which I preſume will be more perſpicuous, and more ſatisfying, than if I were firſt to lay down a theory, and then aſſign the reaſons. By the way, I cannot help expreſſing a wiſh, that this method of inveſtigation were leſs uncommon, and that philoſophers would ſometimes explain to us, not only their diſcoveries, but alſo the proceſs of thought and experiment, whether accidental or intentional, by which they were led to them.

If the boundary of Reaſon and Common Senſe had never been ſettled in any ſcience, I would abandon my preſent ſcheme as altogether deſperate. But when I reflect, that in ſome of the ſciences it has been long ſettled, with the utmoſt accuracy, and to univerſal ſatisfaction, I conceive better hopes; and flatter myſelf, that it may perhaps be poſſible

poſſible to fix it even in the philoſophy of the mind. The ſciences in which this boundary has been long ſettled and acknowledged, are, mathematics, and natural philoſophy; and it is remarkable, that more truth has been diſcovered in thoſe ſciences than in any other. Now, there is not a more effectual way of learning the rules of any art, than by attending to the practice of thoſe who have performed in it moſt ſucceſsfully: a maxim which, I ſuppoſe, is no leſs applicable to the art of inveſtigating truth, than to the mechanical and the fine arts. Let us ſee, then, whether, by attending to the practice of mathematicians and natural philoſophers, as contraſted with the practice of thoſe who have treated of the human mind, we can make any diſcoveries preparatory to the ſolution of this difficulty.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Confirmation of this Theory from the Practice of Mathematicians and Natural Philoſophers.

SECT. I.

THAT the diſtinction between Reaſon and Common Senſe, as here explained, is acknowledged by mathematicians, we have already ſhown*. They have been wiſe enough to truſt to the dictates of common ſenſe, and to take that for truth which they were under a neceſſity of believing, even though it was not in their power to prove it by argument. When a mathematician arrives, in the courſe of his reaſoning, at a principle which he muſt believe, and which is of itſelf ſo evident, that no arguments could either illuſtrate or enforce it, he then knows, that his reaſon can carry him no further, and he ſits down contented: and if he can ſatisfy himſelf, that the whole inveſtigation

* See part 1. chap. 2. ſect. 1.

ſtigation is fairly conducted, and does indeed terminate in this ſelf-evident principle, he is perſuaded, that his concluſion is true, and cannot poſſibly be falſe. Whereas the modern ſceptics, from a ſtrange conceit, that the dictates of their underſtanding are fallacious, and that nature has her roguiſh emiſſaries in every corner, commiſſioned and ſworn to play tricks with poor mortals, cannot find in their heart to admit any thing as truth, upon the bare authority of their common ſenſe. It is doubtleſs a great advantage to geometry, that its firſt principles are ſo few, its ideas ſo diſtinct, and its language ſo definite. Yet a captious and paradoxical wrangler might, by dint of ſophiſtry, involve the principles even of this ſcience in confuſion, provided he thought it worth his while*. But geometrical paradoxes would not rouſe the attention of the public; whereas moral paradoxes, when men begin to look about for arguments in vindication of impiety, debauchery, and injuſtice, become wonderfully intereſting, and can hardly fail of a powerful and numerous patronage. The corrupt judge; the proſtituted courtier; the ſtateſman

* The author of the *Treatiſe of Human Nature* has actually attempted this in his firſt volume: but finding, no doubt, that the public would not take any concern in that part of his ſyſtem, he has not republiſhed it in his ESSAYS.

man who enriches himſelf by the plunder and blood of his country; the pettifogger, who fattens on the ſpoils of the fatherleſs and widow; the oppreſſor, who, to pamper his own beaſtly appetite, abandons the deſerving peaſant to beggary and deſpair; the hypocrite, the debauchee, the gameſter, the blaſphemer,—prick up their ears when they are told, that a celebrated author has written a book full of ſuch comfortable doctrines as the following:—That juſtice is not a natural, but an artificial virtue, depending wholly on the arbitrary inſtitutions of men*, and, previous to the eſtabliſhment of civil ſociety, not at all incumbent:—That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are all of the ſame kind†; in other words, That to want honeſty, to want underſtanding, and to want a leg, are equally the objects of moral diſapprobation; and therefore that it is no more a man's duty to be grateful or pious, than to have the genius of Homer, or the ſtrength and beauty of Achilles:—That every human action is neceſſary, and could not have been different from what it is‡:---That when we ſpeak of power as an attribute of any being, God himſelf not excepted, we uſe words with-

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 37.
† Ibid vol. 3. part 3. ſect. 4.
‡ Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 91. edit. 1767.

without meaning:—That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with any power, *much leſs* of one endued with infinite power; and that we can never have reaſon to believe, that any object, or quality of an object, exiſts, of which we cannot form an idea *:---That it is unreaſonable to believe God to be infinitely wiſe and good, while there is any evil or diſorder in the univerſe; and that we have no good reaſon to think, that the univerſe proceeds from a cauſe†:--That the external material world does not exiſt ‡; and that if the external world be once called in doubt as to its exiſtence, we ſhall be at a loſe to find arguments by which we may prove the Being of God, or any of his attributes ‖:———That thoſe who believe any thing certainly are fools **:——That adultery muſt be practiſed, if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practiſed, it would ſoon ceaſe to be ſcandalous; and that, if practiſed ſecretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 284. 302 432. &c.

† Hume's Eſſay on a Particular Providence and Future State.

‡ Berkeley's and Hume's Works *paſſim*.

‖ Hume's Eſſay on the Academical or Sceptical Philoſophy, part 1.

** Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 468.

to be thought no crime at all * :—That the queſtion concerning the ſubſtance of the ſoul is unintelligible † :—That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cauſe of thought ‡ :---That the ſoul of man becomes every different moment a different being ‖ ; ſo that the actions I performed laſt year, or yeſterday, or this morning, whether virtuous or vicious, are no more imputable to me, than the virtues of Ariſtides are imputable to Nero, or the crimes of Nero to the MAN of Ross.

I know no geometrical axiom, more perſpicuous, more evident, more generally acknowledged, than this propoſition, (which every man believes of himſelf,) "My body exiſts;" yet this has been denied, and volumes written to prove it falſe. Who will pretend to ſet bounds to this ſpirit of ſcepticiſm and ſophiſtry? Where are the principles that can ſtop its progreſs, when it has already attacked the exiſtence, both of the human body, and of the human ſoul? When it denies, and attempts to diſprove this, I cannot ſee why it may not as well deny a whole

* Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 409. edit. 1767.
† Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 434.
‡ Id. ibid.
‖ Id. vol. 1. p. 48.

whole to be greater than a part, the radii of the ſame circle to be equal to one another; and affirm, that two right lines do contain a ſpace, and that it is poſſible for the ſame thing to be and not to be.

Had our ſceptics been conſulted when the firſt geometrical inſtitutions were compiled, they would have given a ſtrange turn to the face of affairs. They would have demanded reaſons for the belief of every axiom; and as none could have been given, would have ſuſpected a fallacy; and probably (for the art of metaphyſical book-making is not of difficult attainment) have made books to prove *a priori*, that an axiom, from its very nature, cannot be true; or at leaſt that we cannot with certainty pronounce whether it is ſo or not. "Take heed to yourſelves, "gentlemen; you are going to lay the "foundations of a ſcience; be careful to "lay them as deep as poſſible. Let the "love of doubt and diſputation animate "you to invincible perſeverence. You muſt "go deeper; truth (if there be any ſuch "thing) loves profundity and darkneſs. "Hitherto I ſee you quite diſtinctly; and, "let me tell you, that is a ſtrong pre-"ſumption againſt your method of opera-"tion. I would not give twopence for "that philoſophy which is obvious and in-

"telligible.

" telligible*. Tear up that prejudice, that " I may ſee what ſupports it. I ſee you can- " not move it, and therefore am violently " diſpoſed to queſtion its ſtability; you can- " not pierce it, therefore who knows but it " may be made of unſound materials? There " is no truſting to appearances. It is the " glory of a philoſopher to doubt; yea, he " muſt doubt, both when he is doubtful, " and when he is not doubtful †. Some- " times, indeed, we philoſophers are abſo- " lutely and neceſſarily determined to live, " and talk, and act, like other people, and to " believe the exiſtence both of ourſelves and " of other things: but to this abſolute and " neceſſary determination, we ought not " to ſubmit, but in every incident of life " ſtill to preſerve our ſcepticiſm. Yes, " friend, I tell you, we ought ſtill to do " what is contrary to that to which we are " abſolutely and neceſſarily determined ‡. I " ſee you preparing to ſpeak; but I tell " you

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 3. 4.

† " A true ſceptic will be diffident of his philoſophical " doubts, as well as of his philoſophical conviction."
Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 474.

‡ " I dine, I play a game at back-gammon, I converſe, " and am merry with my friends; and when, after three or " four hours amuſement, I would return to theſe ſpeculations, " they

" you once for all, that if you reaſon or be-
" lieve any thing *certainly* you are a fool*.—
" Good Sir, how deep muſt we dig? Is not
" this a ſure foundation?—I have no reaſon
" to think ſo, as I cannot ſee what is under it.
" Then we muſt dig downward *in infinitum!*
" —And why not? You think you are ar-
" rived at certainty. This very conceit of
" yours is a proof that you have not gone
" deep enough: for you muſt know, that
" the underſtanding, when it acts alone,
" and according to its moſt general prin-
" ciples, entirely ſubverts itſelf, and leaves
" not the loweſt degree of evidence in any
" pro-

" they appear ſo cold, ſo ſtrained, and ſo ridiculous, that I
" cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further. Here
" then I find myſelf abſolutely and neceſſarily determined to
" live, and talk, and act, like other people in the common af-
" fairs of life." *Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 467.

" In all the incidents of life we ought ſtill to preſerve our
" ſcepticiſm. If we believe that fire warms, or water
" refreſhes, 'tis only becauſe it coſts us too much pains to
" think otherwiſe. Nay, if we are philoſophers, it ought
" only to be upon ſceptical principles."

Id. p. 469.

* " If I muſt be a fool, as all thoſe who reaſon or believe
" any thing *certainly* are, my follies ſhall at leaſt be natural
" and agreeable." *Id. p.* 468.

The inaccuracy of the expreſſion makes it difficult to gueſs, whether Mr. HUME means, that all who believe any thing are *certainly* fools, or that all are fools who believe any thing *to be certain.*---But whether we ſuppoſe it to have the former meaning, or the latter, is a thing of ſmall concern.

" propoſition, either in philoſophy or com-
" mon life*. This to the illiterate vulgar
" may ſeem as great a contradiction or para-
" dox, as if we were to talk of a man's
" jumping down his own throat: but we
" whoſe brains are heated with metaphyſic,
" are not ſtartled at paradoxes or contradic-
" tions, becauſe we are ready to reject all
" belief and reaſoning, and can look upon
" no opinion even as more probable or more
" likely than another †. You are no true
" philoſopher if you either begin or end
" your inquiries with the belief of any thing.
" —Well, Sir, you may doubt and diſpute as
" long as you pleaſe; but I believe that I am
" come to a ſure foundation: here therefore
" will I begin to build, for I am certain there
" can be no danger in truſting to the ſtabi-
" lity of that which is immoveable.--Cer-
" tain! Poor credulous fool! Hark ye, ſir-
" rah, you may be what the vulgar call an
" honeſt man, and a good workman; but I
am certain (I mean I am in doubt whether
" I may

* Verbatim from Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 464, 465.

† " The intenſe view of theſe manifold contradictions and
" imperfections in human reaſon, has ſo wrought upon me, and
" heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and
" reaſoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more pro-
" bable or likely than another.

Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 466.

" I may not be certain) that you are no
" philoſopher. Philoſopher indeed! to take
" a thing of ſuch conſequence for granted,
" without proof, without examination! I
" hold you four to one, that I ſhall demon-
" ſtrate *a priori*, that this ſame edifice of
" yours will be good for nothing. I am in-
" clined to think, that we live in too early a
" period to diſcover ANY PRINCIPLES that
" will bear the examination of the lateſt poſ-
" terity; the world, Sir, is not yet arrived at
" the years of diſcretion: it will be time e-
" nough, two or three thouſands years hence,
" for men to begin to dogmatize, and affirm,
" that two and two are four, that a triangle
" is not a ſquare, that the radii of the ſame
" circle are equal, that a whole is greater
" than one of its parts; that ingratitude and
" murder are crimes, that benevolence, juſ-
" tice, and fortitude, are virtues; that fire
" burns, that the ſun ſhines, that human
" creatures exiſt, or that there is ſuch a thing
" as exiſtence. Theſe are points which our
" poſterity, if they be wiſe, will very pro-
" bably reject *. Theſe are points, which if
" they

* " Perhaps we are ſtill in too early an age of the world,
" to diſcover *any principles* which will bear the examination
" of the lateſt poſterity."

Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. *p.* 473

Some

" they do not reject, they will be arrant " fools. This is my judgment, and I am cer- " tain it is right. I maintain, indeed, that " mankind are certain of nothing: but I " maintain, notwithſtanding, that my own " opinions are true. And if any body is ill- " natured enough to call this a contradiction, " I proteſt againſt his judgment, and once for " all declare, that I mean not either to con- " tradict myſelf, or to acknowledge myſelf " guilty of ſelf-contradiction."

I am well aware, that mathematical certainty is not to be expected in any ſcience but

Some perhaps may blame me for laying any ſtreſs on detached ſentences, and for underſtanding theſe ſtrong expreſſions in a ſtrict ſignification. But it is not my intention to take any unfair advantages. I ſhould willingly impute theſe abſurd ſentences and expreſſions to the author's inadvertency: but then I muſt impute the whole ſyſtem to the ſame cauſe; for they imply nothing that is not again and again inculcated, either directly or indirectly, in Mr. HUME's writings. It is true ſome of them are ſelf contradictory, and all of them ſtrongly diſplay the futility of this pretended ſcience. But who is to blame for this? They who allow themſelves to contradict matter of fact, either in converſation or writing, will find it no eaſy matter to avoid contradicting themſelves.—Again, if this ſcience be ſo uſeleſs, and if its inutility be ſometimes acknowledged even by Mr. HUME himſelf, why, it may be ſaid, ſo much zeal in confuting it? For this plain reaſon, Becauſe it is immoral and pernicious, as well as unprofitable and abſurd; and becauſe, with all its abſurdity, it has been approved and admired by ſciolifts, fops, and profligates; and been the occaſion of much evil to individuals, and of much detriment as well as danger to ſociety.

but mathematics. But I ſuppoſe that in every ſcience, ſome kind of certainty is attainable, or ſomething at leaſt ſufficient to command belief: and whether this reſt on ſelf-evident axioms, or on the evidence of ſenſe, memory or teſtimony, it is ſtill certain to me, if I feel that I muſt believe it. And in every ſcience, as well as in geometry, I preſume it would be conſiſtent both with logic and with good ſenſe, *to take that for an ultimate principle, which forces our belief by its own intrinſic evidence, and which cannot by any reaſoning be rendered more evident.*

SECT. II.

IN natural philoſophy, the evidence of ſenſe and mathematical evidence go hand in hand; and the one produces conviction as affectually as the other. A natural philoſopher would make a poor figure, ſhould he take it in his head to diſbelieve or diſtruſt the evidence of his ſenſes. The time was, indeed, when matters were on a different footing; when phyſical truths were made out, not by experiment and obſervation, but by dint of ſyllogiſm, or in the more compendious way of *ipſe dixit*. But natural philoſophy was then, what the philoſophy of

the mind in the hands of our ſceptics is now, a ſyſtem of ſophiſms, contrived for the vindication of falſe theories.

That natural philoſophers never queſtion the evidence of ſenſe, nor ſeek either to diſprove or to correct it by reaſoning, is a poſition, which to many may at firſt ſight ſeem diſputable. I forſee ſeveral objections, but ſhall content myſelf with examining two of the moſt important. And theſe I ſhall ſet in ſuch a light, as will, I hope, ſhow them to be inconcluſive, and at the ſame time preclude all other objections.

1. Do we not, (it will be ſaid), both in our phyſical obſervations, and in the common affairs of life, reject the evidence of ſight, in regard to the magnitude, extenſion, figure and diſtance of viſible objects, and truſt to that of touch, which we know to be leſs fallacious? I ſee two buildings on the top of yonder mountain; they ſeem to my eyes to be only three or four feet aſunder, of a round ſhape, and not larger than my two thumbs: but I have been at the place, and having aſcertained their diſtance, ſize, and figure, by touch or menſuration, I know, that they are ſquare towers, forty yards aſunder, and fifty feet high. Do I not in this caſe reject the evidence of my ſight as fallacious, and truſt to that of touch? And what is it but

reaſon

reaſon that induces me to do ſo? How then can it be ſaid, that from the evidence of ſenſe there is no appeal to reaſon?—It will however, be eaſy to ſhow, that in this inſtance we diſtruſt neither ſight nor touch, but believe implicitly in both; not becauſe we can confirm their evidence by reaſoning, but becauſe the law of our nature will not permit us to diſbelieve their evidence.

Do you perceive theſe two objects when you ſhut your eyes? No.—It is, then, by your ſight only that you perceive them? It is.—Does your ſight perceive any thing in theſe two objects, but a certain viſible magnitude, extenſion and figure? No.—Do you believe that theſe towers really appear to your eyes round, three feet aſunder, and of the ſize of your thumbs? Yes, I believe they have that appearance to my eyes.—And do you not alſo believe, that, to the eyes of all men who ſee as you do, and look at theſe objects from the place in which you now ſtand, they have the very ſame appearance? I have no reaſon to think otherwiſe.--You believe, then, that the viſible magnitude, diſtance and ſhape, of theſe towers, is what it appears to be? or do you think that your eyes ſee wrong? Be ſure, the viſible magnitude, figure and diſtance, are not different from what I perceive them to be.—But how

do you know, that what you perceive by ſight either exiſts, or is what it appears to be? Not by reaſoning, but by inſtinct.

Of the viſible magnitude, extenſion, and figure, our eyes give us a true perception. It is a law of nature, That while viſible objects retire from the eye, the viſible magnitude becomes leſs as the diſtance becomes greater: and the proportion between the increaſing diſtance and the decreaſing viſible magnitude is ſo well known, that the viſible magnitude of any given object placed at a given diſtance, may be aſcertained with geometrical exactneſs. The true viſible magnitude of objects is therefore a fixed and determinate thing; that is, the viſible magnitude of the ſame object, at the ſame diſtance, is always the ſame: we believe, that it is what our eyes perceive it to be; if we did not, the art of perſpective would be impoſſible; at leaſt we could not acknowledge, that there is any truth in that art.

But the object (you reply) ſeems no bigger than your thumb; and you believe it to be fifty feet high: how is that ſenſation reconcileable with this belief? You may eaſily reconcile them, by recollecting, (what is obvious enough,) that the object of your belief is the tangible magnitude; that of your ſenſation, the viſible. The viſible magnitude

is

is a perception of ſenſe; and we have ſeen already, that it is conceived to be a true, and not a fallacious perception: the tangible magnitude you do not at preſent perceive by ſenſe; you only remember it; or perhaps you infer it from the viſible, in conſequence of your knowledge of the laws of perſpective. When we ſee a lump of ſalt at a little diſtance, we may perhaps take it for ſugar. Is this a falſe ſenſation? is this a proof, either that our taſte, or that our ſight is fallacious? No: this is only an erroneous opinion formed upon a true ſenſation. A falſe ſenſation we cannot ſuppoſe it to be, without ſuppoſing that taſtes are perceived by the eyes. And you cannot believe your opinion of the magnitude of theſe towers to be a falſe ſenſation, except you believe that tangible qualities are perceived by ſight. When we ſpeak of the magnitude of objects, we generally mean the tangible magnitude, which is no more an object of ſight than of hearing. For it is demonſtrated in optics, that a perſon endued with ſight, but ſo fettered from his birth as to have no opportunity of gaining experience by touch, could never form any diſtinct notion of the diſtance, extenſion, magnitude, or figure of any thing. Theſe are perceptions, not of ſight, but of touch. We judge of them

them indeed from the viſible appearance; but it is only in conſequence of our having found, that certain changes in the viſible appearance do always accompany, and intimate, certain changes in the tangible diſtance, magnitude, and figure. Viſible magnitude, and tangible magnitude, are quite different things; the former changes with every change of diſtance, the latter is always the ſame; the one is perceived by one ſenſe, the other by another. So that when you ſay, I ſee a tower two miles off, which appears no bigger than my thumb, and yet I believe it to be a thouſand times bigger than my whole body;—your ſenſation is perfectly conſiſtent with your belief: the contrariety is merely verbal; for the word *bigger*, in the firſt clauſe, refers to viſible, in the ſecond, to tangible magnitude. There is here no more real inconſiſtency than if you were to ſay, I ſee a conical body of a white colour, and I believe it to have a ſweet taſte. If there be any difficulty in conceiving this, it muſt ariſe from our being more apt to confound the objects of ſight and touch, than thoſe of any other two ſenſes. As the knowledge of tangible qualities is of more conſequence to our happineſs and preſervation, than the knowledge of viſible appearances, which in themſelves can do neither good nor harm; we fix our principal attention on the

the tangible magnitude, the viſible appearance ſerving only as a ſign by which we judge of it: the mind makes an inſtantaneous tranſition from the viſible appearance, which it overlooks, to the tangible quality, on which it fixeth its attention; and the ſign is as little attended to, in compariſon of the thing ſignified, as the ſhape of written characters, or the ſound of articulate voices, in compariſon of the ideas which the writer or ſpeaker means to communicate.

But all men (it may be ſaid) do not thus diſtinguiſh between viſible and tangible magnitude. Many philoſophers have affirmed, and the vulgar ſtill believe, that magnitude is a ſenſation both of ſight and touch: thoſe people, therefore, when ſenſible of the diminiſhed viſible appearance of the diſtant object, muſt ſuppoſe, that the perception they receive by ſight of the magnitude of that object, is really a falſe perception; becauſe different from what they ſhould receive by touch, or even by ſight, if the object were within three yards of their eyes. At any rate, they muſt ſuppoſe, that what their ſight perceives concerning magnitudes is not always to be depended on; and therefore that their ſight is a fallacious faculty.

Let this objection have as much weight as you pleaſe; yet will it not prove, that the evidence

evidence of ſenſe may be either confirmed or confuted by reaſon. Suppoſe then I perceive real magnitude, both by ſight and touch. I obſerve, that what my ſight perceives of magnitude is not always conſiſtent, either with itſelf, or with the ſenſations received by touch from the ſame object. The ſame man, within the ſame hour, appears ſix feet high, and not one foot high, according as I view him at the diſtance of two yards or of two miles. What is to be done in this caſe? both ſenſations I cannot believe? for that the man really changes his ſtature, is altogether incredible. I believe his ſtature to be always the ſame; and I find, that to my touch it always appears the ſame; and that, when I look at the man at the diſtance of a few feet, my viſible perception of his magnitude coincides with my tangible perception. I muſt therefore believe, that what my ſight intimates concerning the magnitude of diſtant objects is not to be depended on. But whence ariſes this belief? Can I prove, by argument, that the man does not change his ſtature? that the ſenſe, whoſe perceptions are all conſiſtent, is a true, and not a fallacious faculty? or that a ſenſe is not fallacious, when its perceptions coincide with the perceptions of another ſenſe? No, I can prove none of theſe points. It is inſtinct,

inſtinct, and not reaſon, that determines me to believe my touch; it is inſtinct, and not reaſon, that determines me to believe, that viſible ſenſations, when conſiſtent with tangible, are not fallacious; and it is either inſtinct, or reaſoning founded on experience, (that is, on the evidence of ſenſe), that determines me to believe the man's ſtature a permanent, and not a changeable thing. The evidence of ſenſe is therefore deciſive; from it there is no appeal to reaſon: and if I were to become ſceptical in regard to it, I ſhould believe neither the one ſenſe nor the other; and of all experience, and experimental reaſoning, I ſhould become equally diſtruſtful.

As the experience of an undiſcerning or careleſs ſpectator may be confirmed, or corrected, by that of one who is more attentive, or more ſagacious, ſo the evidence of an imperfect ſenſe may be corrected by that of another ſenſe which we conceive to be more perfect. But the evidence of ſenſe can never be corrected by any reaſoning, except by that which proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that our ſenſes are not fallacious. And all our notions concerning the perfection or imperfection of ſenſe are either inſtinctive, and therefore principles of common ſenſe; or founded in experience, and therefore ultimately

mately reſolvable into this maxim, That things are what our ſenſes repreſent them.

Lucretius is much puzzled (as his maſter Epicurus had been before him) about the degree of credit due to our viſible perceptions of magnitude. He juſtly enough obſerves, that no principle can be confuted, except by another more evident principle; and, therefore, that the teſtimony of ſenſe, than which nothing is more evident, cannot be confuted at all*: that the teſtimony of the noſtrils con-

* See Diogenes Laertius, book 10.—Lucretius de rerum natura, lib. 4. ver. 480. This author had ſagacity enough to perceive the abſurdity of Pyrrhoniſm, and to make ſeveral judicious remarks on the nature of evidence. But in applying theſe to his own theory, every one knows that he is by no means conſiſtent. The poem of Lucretius is a melancholy ſpectacle; it is the picture of a great genius in the ſtate of lunacy. Except when the whim of his ſect comes acroſs his imagination, he argues with propriety, perſpicuity, and elegance. Pathos of ſentiment, ſweetneſs of ſtyle, harmony of numbers, and a beauty, and ſometimes a majeſty, of deſcription, not unworthy of Virgil, render his poem highly amuſing, in ſpite of its abſurd philoſophy. A talent for extenſive obſervation he ſeems to have poſſeſſed in an extraordinary degree; but where-ever the peculiar tenets of Epicureaniſm are concerned, he ſees every thing through a falſe medium. So fatal is the admiſſion of wrong principles. Perſons of the moſt exalted underſtanding have as much need to guard againſt them, as thoſe of the meaneſt capacity. If they are ſo imprudent, or ſo unfortunate, as to adopt them, their ſuperior genius, like the ſtrength of a madman, will ſerve no other purpoſe than to involve them in greater difficulties, and give them the power of doing more miſchief.

concerning odour cannot be corrected or refuted by that of the eye, nor the eye by the ear, nor the ear by the touch, nor the touch by the taſte; becauſe each of theſe ſenſes hath a ſet of objects peculiar to itſelf, of which the other ſenſes cannot judge, becauſe indeed they cannot perceive them. All this is very well; but there is one thing wanting, which I ſhould think obvious enough, even to one of Epicurean principles. Of taſtes we judge by the palate only; of ſmell, by the noſtrils only; of ſound, by the ears only; of colours, by the ſight only; of hardneſs, ſoftneſs, heat, cold, &c. by the touch only; but of magnitude we judge both by ſight and touch. In regard to magnitude, we muſt therefore believe either our ſight, or our touch, or both, or neither. To believe neither is impoſſible: if we believe both, we ſhall contradict ourſelves: if we truſt our ſight, and not our touch, our belief at one time will be inconſiſtent with our belief at another; we ſhall think the ſame man ſix feet high, and not one foot high: we muſt therefore believe our touch, if we would exert any conſiſtent belief in regard to magnitude.

2. But do we not, in phyſical experiments, acknowledge the deceitfulneſs of ſenſe, when we have recourſe to the teleſcope and microſcope;

cope; and when, in order to analyſe light, which, to our unaſſiſted ſight, appears one uniform uncompounded thing, we tranſmit the rays of it through a priſm? I anſwer, this implies the *imperfection*, not the *deceitfulneſs*, of ſenſe. For if I ſuppoſe my ſight fallacious, I can no more truſt it, when aſſiſted by a teleſcope or microſcope, than when unaſſiſted. I cannot prove, that things are as they appear to my unaſſiſted ſight; and I can as little prove, that things are as they appear to my ſight aſſiſted by glaſſes.

But is it not agreeable to common ſenſe to believe, that light is one uniform uncompounded thing? and if ſo, is not common ſenſe in an error? and what can rectify this error but reaſoning?—I anſwer, it is undeniable, that light to the unaſſiſted eye appears uncompounded and uniform. If from this I infer, that light is preciſely what it appears to be, I form a wrong judgment, which I may afterwards rectify, upon the evidence of ſenſe, when I ſee a ray of light tranſmitted through a priſm. Here an error of judgment, or a falſe inference of reaſon, is rectified by my truſting to the evidence of ſenſe; to which evidence inſtinct or common ſenſe determines me to truſt.

But is it not common ſenſe that leads me to form this wrong judgment? Do not all man-

mankind naturally, and previouſly to all influence from education, judge in the ſame manner? Did not all philoſophers before Newton, and do not all the unlearned to this day, believe that light is a ſimple fluid?—I anſwer, Common Senſe teacheth me, and all mankind, to truſt to experience. Experience tells us, that our unaſſiſted ſight, though ſufficiently acute for the ordinary purpoſes of life, is not acute enough to diſcern the minute texture of viſible objects. If, notwithſtanding this experience, we believe, that the minute texture of light, or of any other viſible ſubſtance, is nothing different from that appearance which we perceive by the naked eye; then our belief contradicts our experience, and conſequently is inconſiſtent with common ſenſe.

But what if you have had no experience ſufficient to convince you, that your ſenſes are not acute enough to diſcern the texture of the minute parts of bodies?——Then it is certain, that I can never attain this conviction by mere reaſoning. If a man were to reaſon *a priori* about the nature of light, he might chop logic till doomſday, before he convinced me, that light is compounded of rays of ſeven different colours. But if he tell me of experiments which he has made, or which he knows to have been made, this

is

is quite another matter. I believe his teſtimony, and it makes up for my own want of experience. When I confide in his veracity, I conceive, and believe, that his ſenſes communicated a true perception; and that, if I had been in his place, I ſhould alſo have been convinced, by the evidence of my ſenſe, that light is truly compounded of rays of ſeven different colours. But I muſt repeat, that a ſuppoſition of my ſenſes being fallacious, would render me wholly inacceſſible to conviction, both on the one ſide and on the other.

Suppoſe a man, on ſeeing the coloured rays thrown off from the priſm, ſhould think the whole a deluſion, and owing to the nature of the medium through which the light is tranſmitted, not to the nature of the light itſelf; and ſhould tell me, that he could as eaſily believe my face to be of a green colour, becauſe it has that appearance when viewed through a pair of green ſpectacles, as that every ray of light conſiſts of ſeven diſtinct colours, becauſe it has that appearance when tranſmitted through a priſm:—would it be poſſible to get the better of this prejudice, without reaſoning? I anſwer, it would not: but the reaſoning uſed muſt all depend upon experiments; every one of which muſt be rejected, if the teſtimony

mony of ſenſe be not admitted as deciſive. I could think of ſeveral expedients, in the way of appeals to ſenſe, by which it might be poſſible to reconcile him to the Neutonian theory of light; but, in the way of argument, I cannot deviſe a ſingle one.

On an imperfect view of nature, falſe opinions may be formed: but theſe may be rectified by a more perfect view; or, which in many caſes will amount to the ſame thing, by the teſtimony of thoſe who have obtained a more perfect view. The powers of man operate only within a certain ſphere; and till an object be brought within that ſphere, it is impoſſible for them to perceive it. I ſee a ſmall object, which I know to be a man, at the diſtance of half a mile; but cannot diſcern his complexion, whether it be black or fair; nor the colour of his clothes, whether it be brown, or black, or blue; nor his noſe, whether it be long or ſhort: I cannot even diſcern, whether he have any noſe at all: and his whole body ſeems to be of one uniform black colour. Perhaps I am ſo fooliſh as to infer, that therefore the man has no noſe; that his clothes are black, and his face of the colour of his clothes. On going up to him, I diſcover that he is a handſome man, of a fair complexion, dreſſed in blue. Surely it is not reaſoning that ſets me right, in

in this inſtance; but it is a perfect view of an object that rectifies a wrong opinion formed upon an imperfect view.

I hear the ſound of a muſical inſtrument at a diſtance; but hear it ſo faintly, that I cannot determine whether it be that of a trumpet, a hautboy, a German flute, a French horn, or a common flute. I want to know from what inſtrument the ſound proceeds; and I have no opportunity of knowing from the information of others. Shall I ſtand ſtill where I am, and reaſon about it? no; that would make me no wiſer. I go forward to the place from whence the ſound ſeems to come; and by and by I can perceive, that the ſound is different from that of a French horn and of a trumpet: but as yet I cannot determine whether it be the ſound of a hautboy or of a flute. I go on a little further, and now I plainly diſtinguiſh the ſound of a flute; but perhaps I ſhall not be able to know whether it be a German or a common flute, except by means of my other ſenſes, that is, by handling or looking at it.

It is needleſs to multiply inſtances for illuſtrating the difference between a perfect and an imperfect view of an object, and for ſhowing, that the mind truſts to the former, but diſtruſts the latter. For obtaining a perfect view, (or perfect perception), we ſometimes employ

ploy the ſame ſenſe in a nearer ſituation; ſometimes we make uſe of inſtruments, as ear-trumpets, ſpectacles, microſcopes, teleſcopes; ſometimes we have recourſe to the teſtimony of our other ſenſes, or of the ſenſes of other men: in a word, we rectify or aſcertain the evidence of ſenſe by the evidence of ſenſe: but we never ſubject the evidence of ſenſe to the cogniſance of reaſon; for in ſenſations that are imperfect or indiſtinct, reaſoning could neither ſupply what is deficient, nor aſcertain what is indefinite.

Our internal, as well as external ſenſes, may be, and often are, impoſed upon, by inaccurate views of their objects. We may in ſincerity of heart applaud, and afterwards condemn, the ſame perſon, for the ſame action, according to the different lights in which that action is preſented to our moral faculty. Juſt now I hear a report, that a human body is found dead in the neighbouring fields, with marks of violence upon it. Here a confuſed ſuſpicion ariſes in my mind of murder committed; but my conſcience ſuſpends its judgment till the true ſtate of the caſe be better known: I am not as yet in a condition to perceive thoſe qualities of this event which aſcertain the morality of the action; no more than I can perceive the beauty or deformity of a

face while it is veiled, or at too great diſtance. A paſſenger informs me, that a perſon has been apprehended who confeſſes himſelf the murderer: my moral faculty inſtantly ſuggeſts, that this perſon has committed a crime worthy of a moſt ſevere and exemplary puniſhment. By and by I learn, from what I think good authority, that my former information is falſe, for that the man now dead had made an unprovoked aſſault on the other, who was thus driven to the neceſſity of killing him in ſelf-defence: my conſcience immediately acquits the manſlayer. I ſend a meſſenger to make particular inquiry into this affair; who brings word, that the man was accidently killed by a fowler ſhooting at a bird, who, before he fired, had been at all poſſible pains to diſcover whether any human creature was in the way; but that the deceaſed was in ſuch a ſituation that he could not be diſcovered. I regret the accident; but I blame neither party. Afterwards I learn, that this fowler was a careleſs fellow, and though he had no bad intention, was not at due pains to obſerve whether any human creature would be hurt by his firing. I blame his negligence with great ſeverity, but I cannot charge him with guilt ſo enormous as that of murder. Here my moral faculty

paſſes

paſſes ſeveral different judgments on *the ſame action*; and each of them is right, and will be in its turn believed to be right, and truſted to accordingly, as long as the information which gave riſe to it is believed to be true. I ſay *the ſame action*, not *the ſame intention*; a different intention appears in the manſlayer from each information; and it is only the intention and affections that the moral faculty condemns or approves. To diſcover the intention wherewith actions are performed, reaſoning is often neceſſary: but the deſign of ſuch reaſoning, is not to ſway or inform the conſcience, but only to aſcertain thoſe circumſtances or qualities of the action from which the intention of the agent may appear. When this becomes manifeſt, the conſcience of mankind immediately and intuitively declares it to be virtuous, or vitious, or innocent. — Theſe different judgments of the moral faculty are ſo far from proving it fallacious, that they prove the contrary: at leaſt this faculty would be extremely fallacious, and abſolutely uſeleſs, if, in the caſe now ſuppoſed, it did not form different judgments. —— While the intention of the agent is wholly unknown, an action is upon the ſame footing in regard to its morality, as a human face, in regard to its beauty, while

it is veiled, or at too great diſtance. By removing the veil, or walking up to the object, we perceive its beauty and features; and by reaſoning, or by information concerning the circumſtances of the action, we are enabled to diſcover or infer the intention of the agent. The act of removing the veil, or of walking up to the object, has no effect on the eye; nor has the reaſoning any effect on the conſcience.—While we view an object through an impure or unequal medium, through a pair of green ſpectacles, or an uneven pane of glaſs, we ſee it diſcoloured or diſtorted: juſt ſo, when miſrepreſented, a good action may ſeem evil, and an evil action good. If we be ſuſpicious of the repreſentation, if we be aware of the improper medium, we diſtruſt the appearance accordingly; if not, we do and muſt believe it genuine. It is by reaſoning from our experience of human actions and their cauſes, or by the teſtimony of credible witneſſes, that we detect miſrepreſentations concerning moral conduct; and it is alſo by the experience of our own ſenſes, or by our belief in thoſe who have had ſuch experience, that we become ſenſible of inequalities or obſcurities in the medium through which we contemplate viſible objects. In either caſe the evidence of ſenſe is admitted as finally deciſive.

A diſtem-

A diſtempered ſenſe, as well as an impure or unequal medium, may doubtleſs communicate falſe ſenſations; but we are never impoſed upon by them in matters of conſequence. A perſon in a fever may think honey bitter, and the ſmell of a roſe offenſive; but the deluſion is of ſo ſhort continuance, and of ſo ſingular a kind, that it can do no harm, either to him, or to the cauſe of truth. To a jaundiced eye, the whole creation may ſeem tinctured with yellow; but the patient's former experience, and his belief in the teſtimony of others, who aſſure him, that they perceive no alteration in the colour of bodies, and that the alteration he perceives is a common attendant on his diſeaſe, will ſufficiently guard him againſt miſtakes. If he were to diſtruſt the evidence of ſenſe, he could believe neither his own experience nor their teſtimony. He corrects, or at leaſt becomes ſenſible of, the falſe ſenſation, by means of ſenſations formerly received when he was in health; that is, he corrects the evidence of an ill-informed ſenſe by that of a well-informed ſenſe, or by the declaration of thoſe whoſe ſenſes he believes to be better informed than his own. Still it is plain, that from the evidence of ſenſe there can be no appeal to reaſon.

We

We conclude, therefore, that in natural philoſophy, our ſenſations are not ſuppoſed fallacious, and that reaſoning is not carried beyond the principles of common ſenſe. And yet in this ſcience full ſcope is given to impartial inveſtigation. If, after the firſt experimental proceſs, you ſuſpect that the object may be ſet in a ſtill fairer light, I know no law in logic, or in good ſenſe, that can or ought to hinder you from making a new trial: but if this new trial turn to no account; if the object ſtill appear the ſame, or if it appear leſs diſtinct than before, it were folly not to remain ſatisfied with the firſt trial. Newton tranſmitted one of the refracted primitive colours through a ſecond priſm, thinking it not impoſſible that this colour might reſolve itſelf into other ſtill more ſimple, but finding it remain unaltered, he was ſatisfied that the primitive colours are not compounded, but ſimple, and that the experimental proceſs had already been carried far enough.—I take in my hand a perſpective glaſs, whoſe tube may be lengthened and ſhortend at pleaſure; and I am to find out, by my own induſtry, that preciſe length at which the maker deſigned it ſhould be uſed in looking at diſtant objects. I make ſeveral trials to no purpoſe; the diſtant object appears not at all, or but very confuſedly.

fuſedly. I hold one end of the perſpective at my eye with one hand, and with the other I gradually ſhorten the tube, having firſt drawn it out to its greateſt length. At firſt all is confuſion; now I can diſcern the inequalities of the mountains in the horizon; now the object I am in queſt of begins to appear; it becomes leſs and leſs confuſed; I ſee it diſtinctly. I continue to ſhorten the tube; the object loſes its diſtinct appearance, and begins to relapſe into its former obſcurity. After many trials, I find, that my perſpective exhibits no diſtinct appearance except when it is of one particular length. Here then I fix; I have adjuſted the glaſſes according to the intention of the maker; and I believe that the diſtinct appearance is an accurate repreſentation of the diſtant object, or at leaſt more accurate than any of the confuſed appearances; of which I believe, that they come the nearer to truth the more they approach to diſtinctneſs, and that the moſt confuſed repreſentations are the moſt falſe.

It was not by reaſoning about the fallacy of the ſenſes, and proſecuting a train of argument beyond the principles of common ſenſe, that men diſcovered the true ſyſtem of the world. In the earlier ages, when they imagined the ſun to be little bigger than the mountain beyond which he diſappeared, it

was

was abſurd to think of the earth revolving round him. But in proceſs of time, ingenious men, who applied themſelves to the obſervation of the heavenly bodies, not with a view to confute popular errors, for they could not as yet even ſuſpect the vulgar opinion to be erroneous, but merely to gratify their own laudible curioſity, began to conceive more exalted notions of the mundane ſyſtem. They ſoon diſtinguiſhed the planets from the fixed ſtars, by obſerving the former to be more variable in their appearances. After a long ſucceſſion of years, employed, not in reaſoning, but attentive obſervation, they came at laſt to underſtand the motions of the ſun and moon ſo well, that, to the utter aſtoniſhment of the vulgar, they began to calculate eclipſes: a degree of knowledge they could not attain, without being convinced, that the ſun and moon are very large bodies, placed at very great diſtances from the earth, the former much larger, and more remote, than the latter. Thus far it is impoſſible to ſhow, that any reaſoning had been employed by thoſe ancient aſtronomers, either to prove, or to diſprove, the evidence of the ſenſes. On the contrary, they muſt all along have taken it for granted, that the ſenſes are not fallacious; ſuppoſing only, (what it is certainly agreeable to common

ſenſe

ſenſe to ſuppoſe), that the experience of a diligent obſerver is more to be depended on than that of the inattentive multitude. As men grew more and more acquainted with the motions and appearances of the heavenly bodies, they became more and more ſenſible, that the ſun, earth, and planets, bear ſome very peculiar relation to one another: and having learned from the phenomena of eclipſes, and ſome other natural appearances, that the ſun is bigger than the earth *, they might, without abſurdity, begin to ſuſpect, that poſſibly the ſun might be the centre round which the earth and other planets revolve; eſpecially conſidering the magnificence of that glorious luminary, and the wonderful and delightful effects produced by the influence of his beams, while at the ſame time he ſeems not to derive any advantage from the earth, or other planets. But if the matter had been carried no further, no reaſoning from theſe circumſtances could ever have

* Heraclitus maintained, that the ſun is but a foot broad; Anaxagoras, that he is much larger than the country of Peloponneſus; and Epicurus, that he is no bigger than he appears to the eye. But the aſtronomers of antiquity maintained, that he is bigger than the earth; eight times, according to the Egyptians; eighteen times, according to Eratoſthenes; three hundred times, according to Cleomedes; one thouſand and fifty times, according to Hipparchus; and fifty-nine thouſand three hundred and nineteen times, according to Poſſidonius.

have amounted to a proof of the point in queſtion, though it might breed a faint preſumption in its favour. For ſtill the evidence of ſenſe ſeemed to contradict it; an evidence which nothing can diſprove, but the evidence of ſenſe placed in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation. The invention of optical glaſſes did at laſt furniſh the means of making experiments with regard to this matter, and of putting man in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation; and thus the point was brought to the teſt of common ſenſe. And now, we not only know, that the Copernican theory is true, for every perſon who underſtands it is convinced of its truth; but we alſo know to what cauſes the univerſal belief of the contrary doctrine is to be aſcribed. We know that men, conſidering the remote ſituation of our earth, and the imperfection of our ſenſes, could not have judged otherwiſe than they did, till that imperfection was remedied, either by accuracy of obſervation, or by the invention of optical inſtruments. We ſpeak not of revelation; which has indeed been vouchſafed to man for the regulation of his moral conduct; but which it would be preſumption to expect, or deſire, merely for the gratification of curioſity.

It

It is evident, from what has been ſaid, that in natural philoſophy, as well as in mathematics, no argumentation is proſecuted beyond ſelf-evident principles; that as in the latter all reaſoning terminates in intuition, ſo in the former all reaſoning terminates in the evidence of ſenſe. And as, in mathematics, that is accounted an intuitive axiom, which is of itſelf ſo clear and evident, that it cannot be illuſtrated or inforced by any medium of proof, and which muſt be believed, and is in fact believed, by all, on its own authority; ſo, in natural philoſophy, that is accounted an ultimate principle, undeniable and unqueſtionable, which is ſupported by the evidence of a well-informed ſenſe, placed ſo as to perceive its object. In mathematics, that is accounted falſe doctrine which is inconſiſtent with any ſelf-evident principle; in natural philoſophy, that is rejected which contradicts matter of fact, or, in other words, which is repugnant to the appearances of things as perceived by external ſenſe.

Regulated by this criterion of truth, mathematics and natural philoſophy have become of all ſciences the moſt reſpectable in point of certainty. Hence I am encouraged to hope, that if the ſame criterion were univerſally adopted in the philoſophy

of

of the mind, the ſcience of human nature, inſtead of being, as at preſent, a chaos of uncertainty and contradiction, would acquire a conſiderable degree of certainty, perſpicuity, and order. If truth be at all attainable in this ſcience, (and if it is not attainable, why ſhould we trouble our heads about it?) ſurely it muſt be attained by the ſame means as in thoſe other ſciences. For of the eternal relations and fitneſſes of things, we know nothing: all that we know of truth and falſehood is, that our conſtitution determines us in ſome caſes to believe, in others to diſbelieve; and that to us is truth which we feel that we muſt believe; and that to us is falſehood which we feel that we muſt diſbelieve *. There are innumerable truths with which we are wholly unacquainted; there are perhaps ſome truths which we reject as falſhood: but, ſurely, we muſt both know and believe a truth before we can acknowledge it as ſuch: and belief is nothing but a perception, or, if you pleaſe, an action of the mind, the peculiar nature of which we all know by internal feeling or conſciouſneſs, and cannot poſſibly know in any other way.

I therefore would propoſe, "That in the "philoſophy of human nature, as well as in "phyſics

* See the next ſection.

" phyſics and mathematics, principles be ex-
" amined according to the ſtandard of com-
" mon ſenſe, and be admitted or rejected as
" they are found to agree or diſagree with it:"
more explicitly, " That thoſe doctrines be re-
" jected which contradict matter of fact, that
" is, which are repugnant to the appearances
" of things, as perceived by external and in-
" ternal ſenſe; and that thoſe principles be
" accounted ultimate, undeniable, and un-
" queſtionable, which are warranted by the
" evidence of a well-informed ſenſe, placed
" in circumſtances favourable to a diſtinct
" perception of its object."

But what do you mean by a *well-informed ſenſe?* How ſhall I know, that any particular faculty of mine is not defective, depraved, or fallacious?—Perhaps it is not eaſy, at leaſt it would furniſh matter for too long a digreſſion, to give a full anſwer to this queſtion. Nor is it at preſent neceſſary; becauſe it will appear in the ſequel, that, however difficult it may be in ſome caſes, to diſtinguiſh a firſt principle, yet there are certain marks, by which thoſe reaſonings that tend to the ſubverſion of a firſt principle, may be detected, at leaſt in all caſes of importance. However, we ſhall offer a remark or two in anſwer to the queſtion; which, though they

they ſhould not appear perfectly unexceptionable, may yet throw light on the ſubject, and ſerve to prepare the mind of the reader for ſome things that are to follow.

Firſt, then, if I wanted to certify myſelf concerning any particular ſenſe or percipient faculty, that it is neither depraved nor defective, I ſhould attend to the feelings or ſenſations communicated by it; and obſerve, whether they be clear and definite, and ſuch as I am, of my own accord, diſpoſed to confide in without heſitation, as true, genuine, and natural. If they are ſuch, I ſhould certainly act upon them till I had ſome poſitive reaſon to think them fallacious.—Secondly, I conſider, whether the ſenſations received by this faculty be uniformerly ſimilar in ſimilar circumſtances. If they are not, I ſhould ſuſpect, either that it is now depraved, or was formerly ſo; and if I had no other criterion to direct me, ſhould be much at a loſs to know whether I ought to truſt the former or the latter experience; perhaps I ſhould diſtruſt both. If they are uniform, if my preſent and my paſt experience do exactly coincide, I ſhall then be diſpoſed to think them both right.—Thirdly, I conſider, whether, in acting upon the ſuppoſition that the faculty in queſtion is well-informed, I have ever been miſled to my hurt

hurt or inconvenience; if not, then have I good reaſon to think, that I was not miſtaken when I formed that ſuppoſition, and that this faculty is really what I ſuppoſed it to be.—Fourthly, If the ſenſations communicated by this faculty be incompatible with one another, or irreconcileable to the perceptions of my other faculties, I ſhould ſuſpect a depravation of the former: for the laws of nature, as far as my experience goes, are conſiſtent; and I have a natural tendency to believe that they are univerſally ſo. It is therefore a preſumption, that my faculties are well informed, when the perceptions of one are quite conſiſtent with thoſe of the reſt, and with one another.—In a ſtate of ſolitude I muſt ſatisfy myſelf with theſe *criteria*; but in ſociety I have acceſs to another criterion, which, in many caſes, will be reckoned more deciſive than any of theſe, and which, in concurrence with theſe, will be ſufficient to baniſh doubt from every rational mind. I compare my ſenſations and notions with thoſe of other men; and if I find a perfect coincidence, I ſhall then be ſatisfied that my ſenſations are according to the law of human nature, and therefore right.—To illuſtrate all this by an example:

I want

I want to know whether my ſenſe of ſeeing be a well-informed faculty.—Firſt, I have reaſon to think that it is; becauſe my eyes communicate to me ſuch ſenſations as I, of my own accord, am diſpoſed to confide in. There is ſomething in my perceptions of ſight ſo diſtinct, and ſo definite, that I do not find myſelf in the leaſt diſpoſed to doubt whether things be what my eyes repreſent them. Even the obſcurer informations of this faculty carry along with them their own evidence, and my belief. I am confident, that the ſun and moon are round, as they appear to be, that the rainbow is arched, that graſs is green, ſnow white, and the heavens azure; and this I ſhould have believed, though I had paſſed all my days in ſolitude, and never known any thing of other animals, or their ſenſes.—Secondly, I find that my notions of the viſible qualities of bodies are the ſame now they have always been. If this were not the caſe; if where I ſaw greenneſs yeſterday I were to ſee yellow today, I ſhould be apt to ſuppoſe, that my ſight had ſuffered ſome depravation, except I had reaſon to think, that the object had really changed colour. But indeed we have ſo ſtrong a tendency to believe our ſenſes, that I doubt not but in ſuch a caſe I ſhould be

be more diſpoſed to ſuſpect a change in the object than in my eye-ſight: much would depend on the circumſtances of the caſe. We rub our eyes when we want to look at any thing with accuracy; for we know by experience, that motes, and cloudy ſpecks, which may be removed by rubbing, do ſometimes float in the eye, and hurt the ſight. But if the alteration of the viſible qualities in the external object be ſuch as we have never experienced from a depravation of the organ, we ſhould be inclined to truſt our eye-ſight, rather than to ſuppoſe, that the external object has remained unaltered.—Thirdly, no evil conſequence has ever happened to me when acting upon the ſuppoſition, that my faculty of ſeeing is a well-informed ſenſe: whereas, if I were to act on the contrary ſuppoſition, I ſhould ſoon have cauſe to regret my ſcepticiſm. I ſee a poſt in my way; by turning a little aſide, I paſs it unhurt: but if I had ſuppoſed my ſight fallacious, and gone ſtraight forward, a bloody noſe, or ſomething worſe, might have been the conſequence. If, when I bend my courſe obliquely, in order to avoid the poſt that ſeems to ſtand directly before me, I were to run my head full againſt it, I ſhould inſtantly ſuſpect a depravation in my eye-ſight: but as I never experience any misfortune of this kind, I believe that my ſenſe of ſeeing is a well-

well-informed faculty.—Fourthly, the perceptions received by this ſenſe are perfectly conſiſtent with one another, and with the perceptions received by my other faculties. When I ſee the appearance of a ſolid body in my way, my touch always confirms the teſtimony of my ſight; if it did not, I ſhould ſuſpect a fallacy in one or other of thoſe ſenſes, perhaps in both. When I look on a line of ſoldiers, they all ſeem ſtanding perpendicular, as I myſelf ſtand; but if the men at the extremities of the line, without leaning againſt any thing, were to appear as if they formed an angle of forty-five degrees with the earth's ſurface, I ſhould ſuſpect ſome unaccountable obliquity in my viſion.—Laſtly, after the experience of ſeveral years, after all the knowledge I have been able to gather, concerning the ſenſations of other men, from reading, diſcourſe, and obſervation, I have no reaſon to think their ſenſations of ſight different from mine. Every body, who uſes the Engliſh language, calls ſnow white, and graſs green; and it would be in the higheſt degree abſurd to ſuppoſe, that what they call the ſenſation of whiteneſs, is not the ſame ſenſation which I call by that name. Some few, perhaps, ſee differently from me. A man in the jaundice ſees that roſe yellow which I ſee red; a ſhort-ſighted man ſees that picture confuſedly at the

the diſtance of three yards, which I ſee diſtinctly. But far the greater part of mankind ſee as I do, and differently from thoſe few individuals; whoſe ſenſe of ſeeing I therefore conſider as leſs perfect than mine. Nay, tho' the generality of mankind were ſhort-ſighted, ſtill it would be true, that we, who are not ſo, have the moſt perfect ſight; for our ſight is more accurate in its perceptions, qualifies us better for the buſineſs of life, and coincides more exactly, or at leaſt more immediately, with the ſenſations received by the other ſenſes. Yet the ſhort-ſighted, as well as they who have the acuteſt ſight, truſt to this ſenſe, as ſoon as they are placed in a ſituation favourable to accurate obſervation: all the difference is, that it is more difficult, and often more inconvenient, for ſhort-ſighted perſons to place themſelves in ſuch a ſituation. Still it ſhould be remembered that a *perfect ſenſe* and a *well-informed ſenſe* are not ſynonymous terms. We call a ſenſe *well-informed*, in oppoſition to one that is *depraved* or *fallacious*. *Perfection* and *imperfection* of ſenſe are relative terms; implying a compariſon, either between different men, in reſpect of the acuteneſs of their ſenſes and faculties; or between any ſenſe, as it appears in a particular man, and the degree of acuteneſs which is found to belong to that ſenſe as it appears

in the generality of mankind. There are two teleſcopes, one of which gives a diſtinct view of an object at two, and the other at four miles diſtance: both are equally *well-informed*, (if I may ſo ſpeak); that is, equally true in their repreſentations; but the one is much more *imperfect* than the other.

I do not, at preſent, offer any further illuſtrations of theſe *criteria* of a well-informed ſenſe. The reader who examines them by the rules of common prudence, will perhaps be ſatisfied with them: at leaſt I am apt to think, that few will ſuſpect the veracity of their faculties when they ſtand this teſt. But let it not be ſuppoſed, that I mean to inſinuate, that a man never truſts his faculties till he firſt examine them after this manner: we believe our ſenſes previouſly to all reflection or examination; and we never disbelieve them, but upon the authority of our ſenſes placed in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation.

If the reader is not ſatisfied with theſe *criteria*, it is no great matter. The queſtion concerning a well-informed ſenſe it is not perhaps eaſy to anſwer. I offer theſe remarks rather as hints to be attended to by other adventurers in this part of ſcience, than as a compleat ſolution of the difficulty. If it were not that I preſume ſome advantage may be derived from them in this way, I ſhould

ſhould have omitted them altogether; for on them does not depend the doctrine I mean to eſtabliſh.

SECT. III.

The ſubject continued. Intuitive truths diſtinguiſhable into claſſes.

OF the notions attending the perception of certain truth, we formerly mentioned this as one, "That in regard to ſuch truth, "we ſuppoſe we ſhould entertain the ſame "ſentiments and belief if we were perfectly "acquainted with all nature."* Leſt it ſhould be thought that we mean to extend this notion too far, it ſeems proper to introduce here the following remarks.

1. The axioms and demonſtrated concluſions of geometry are certainly true, and certainly agreeable to the nature of things. Thus we judge of them at preſent; and thus we neceſſarily believe, that we ſhould judge of them, even if we were endued with omniſcience and infallibility. It is a natural dictate of human underſtanding, that the contrary of theſe truths muſt for ever remain abſurd and impoſſible; and that omnipotence itſelf cannot change their nature; though it might ſo deprave

* See part 1. chap. 1.

deprave our judgment, as to make us disbelieve, or not perceive them *.

2. That my body exiſts, and is endued with a thinking, active, and permanent principle, which I call my ſoul;—That the material world hath ſuch an exiſtence as the vulgar aſcribe to it, that is, a real ſeparate exiſtence, to which its being perceived is in no wiſe neceſſary:—That the men, beaſts, houſes, and mountains, we ſee and feel around us, are not imaginary, but real and material beings,

* Some authors are of opinion, that all mathematical truth is reſolveable into identical propoſitions. The following remark to this purpoſe is taken from a Diſſertation on Evidence, printed at Berlin in the year 1764. "Omnes mathematicorum propoſitiones ſunt identicæ, et repræſentantur hac formula, $a=a$ Sunt veritates identicæ, ſub varia forma expreſſæ, imo ipſum, quod dicitur, contradictionis principium, vario modo enunciatum et involutum; ſiquidem omnes hujus generis propoſitiones revera in eo contineantur. Secundum noſtram autem intelligendi facultatem ea eſt propoſitionum differentia, quod quædam longa ratiociniorum ſerie, alia autem breviori via, ad primum omnium principium reducantur, et in illud reſolvantur. Sic v. g. propoſitio $2+2=4$, ſi ultim huc cedit $1+1+1+1=1+1+1+1$, i. e. idem eſt idem; et, proprie loquendo, hoc modo enunciari debet.—Si contingat, adeſſe vel exiſtere quatuor entia, tum exiſtunt quatuor entia; nam de exiſtentia non agunt geometræ, ſed ea hypothetice tantum ſubintelligitur. Inde ſumma oritur certitudo ratiocinia perſpicienti; obſervat nempe idearum identitatem; et hæc eſt evidentia, aſſenſum immediate cogens, quam mathematicam aut geometricam vocamus. Matheſi tamen ſua natura priva non eſt et propria; oritur etenim ex identitatis perceptione, quæ locum habere poteſt, etiamſi ideæ non repræſentent extenſum."

ings, and ſuch, in reſpect of ſhape and tangible magnitude, as they appear to our ſenſes; I am not only conſcious that I believe, but alſo certain, that ſuch is the nature of theſe things; and that, thus far at leaſt, in regard to the nature of theſe things, an omniſcient and infallible being cannot think me miſtaken. Of theſe truths I am ſo certain, that I ſcruple not to pronounce every being in an error who is of a contrary ſentiment concerning them. For ſuppoſe an intelligent creature, an angel for inſtance, to believe that there are not in the univerſe any ſuch things as this ſolar ſyſtem, this earth, theſe mountains, houſes, animals, this being whom I call myſelf; could I, by any effort, bring myſelf to believe, that his opinion is a true one, and implies a propoſition expreſſive of ſomething agreeable to the nature of things? It is impoſſible and inconceivable. My underſtanding intimates, that ſuch an opinion would as certainly be falſe, as it is falſe that two and two are equal to ten, or that things equal to one and the ſame thing are unequal to one another. Yet this is an opinion which omnipotence could render true, by annihilating the whole of this ſolar ſyſtem; or make me admit as true, by depriving me of underſtanding. But ſo long as this ſolar ſyſtem remains

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unannihilated, and my intellect undepraved, there is not a geometrical axiom more true, or more evident to me, than that this ſolar ſyſtem, and all the objects above-mentioned, do exiſt; there is not a geometrical axiom that has any better title to be accounted a principle of human knowledge; there is not a geometrical axiom againſt which it is more abſurd, more unreaſonable, more unphiloſophical, to argue.

3. That ſnow is white, fire hot, gold yellow, and ſugar ſweet, we believe to be certainly true. Theſe bodies affect our eyes, touch, and palate, in a peculiar manner; and we have no reaſon to think, that they affect the organs of different men in a different manner: on the contrary, we believe, with full aſſurance, founded on ſufficient reaſon, that they affect the ſenſes of all men in the ſame manner. The peculiar ſenſation we receive from them depends on three things; on the nature of the object perceived, on the nature of the organ of perception, and on the nature of the percipient being. Of each of theſe things the Deity could change the nature; and make ſugar bitter, fire cold, ſnow black, and gold green. But till this be done; in other words, while things continue as they are, it is as certainly true, that ſnow is white, fire hot, &c. as that two and two are equal to four, or a whole

whole greater than a part. If we ſuppoſe, that ſnow, notwithſtanding its appearance, is black, or not white, we muſt alſo ſuppoſe, that our ſenſes and intellect are fallacious faculties; and therefore cannot admit any thing as true which has no better evidence than that of ſenſe and intellect. If a creature of a different nature from man were to ſay, that ſnow is black, and hot, I ſhould reply, (ſuppoſing him to uſe theſe words in the ſame ſenſe in in which I uſe them), It may poſſibly have that appearance to your ſenſes, but it has not that appearance to mine: it may therefore, in regard to your faculties, be true; and if ſo, it ought to conſtitute a part of your philoſophy: but of my philoſophy it cannot conſtitute a part, becauſe, in reſpect of my faculties, it is falſe, being contrary to fact and experience. If the ſame being were to affirm, that a part is equal to a whole, I ſhould anſwer, it is impoſſible; none can think ſo but thoſe who are deſtitute of underſtanding. If he were to ſay, the ſolar ſyſtem explained by Newton does not exiſt, I ſhould anſwer, you are miſtaken; if your knowledge were not imperfect, you would think otherwiſe; I am certain that it does exiſt.—We ſee, by thus ſtating the caſe, what is the difference between theſe three ſorts of certainty. But ſtill, in reſpect to man, theſe three ſorts are all

all equally evident, equally certain, and equally unſuſceptible of confutation: and none of them can be disbelieved or doubted by us, except we diſavow the diſtinction between truth and falſhood, by ſuppoſing our faculties fallacious.

4. Of moral truth, we cannot bring ourſelves to think, that the Deity's notions (pardon the expreſſion) are contrary to ours. If we believe Him omniſcient and infallible, can we alſo believe, that, in his ſight, cruelty, injuſtice, and ingratitude, are worthy of reward and praiſe, and the oppoſite virtues of blame and puniſhment? It is abſolutely impoſſible. The one belief deſtroys the other. Common ſenſe declares, that a being poſſeſſed of perfect knowledge can no more entertain ſuch a ſentiment, than I with my eyes open can juſt now avoid ſeeing the light. If a created being were, in all caſes, to think that virtue which we think vice, and that vice which we think virtue, what would be our notions of his intelligence? Should we not, without heſitation, pronounce him irrational, and his opinion an abſurdity? The abſurdity indeed is conceivable, and may be expreſſed in words that imply no contradiction: but that any being ſhould think in this manner, and yet not think wrong, is to us as perfectly

perfectly inconceivable, as that the ſame thing ſhould be both true and falſe. *

We ſpeak here of the great and leading principles of moral duty. Many ſubordinate duties there are, which reſult from the form of particular governments, and from particular modes of education; and there are ſome, which, though admirably adapted to the improvement and perfection of our nature, are yet ſo ſublime, that the natural conſcience of mankind, unaſſiſted by revelation, can hardly be ſuppoſed capable of diſcovering them: but in regard to juſtice, gratitude, and thoſe other virtues, of which no rational beings (ſo far as we know) are or can be ignorant, it is impoſſible for us to believe that our ſentiments are wrong. I ſay, there are duties of which no rational beings can be ignorant: for if moral ſentiments be the reſult of a bias, or *vis inſita*, communicated to the rational ſoul by its Creator, then muſt they be as

* Locke ſays, that Moral Truth is ſuſceptible of demonſtration. If by this he means, that it admits of evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy every rational mind, he is certainly in the right. But if by the word *demonſtration* be meant, what Geometricians mean by it, a proof that may be reſolved into one or more ſelf-evident axioms whoſe contraries are inconceivable, we confeſs that neither moral nor hiſtorical truth is ſuſceptible of demonſtration, nor many other truths of the moſt unqueſtionable certainty. However it is not to be ſuppoſed, that Locke intended to uſe this word in any ſtricter ſenſe than what is fixed by general practice; according to which, every proof that brings indubitable evidence to the reaſon or ſenſes may properly be called a demonſtration.

as univerſal as rational nature, and as permanent as the effects of any other natural law; and it is as abſurd to argue againſt their truth or authenticity, as againſt the reality of any other matter of fact. But ſeveral authors of note have denied this inference, as well as the principle whence it proceeds; or at leaſt, by calling the one in queſtion, have endeavoured to make us ſceptical in regard to the other. They have endeavoured to prove, that moral ſentiment is different in different countries, and under different forms of religion, government, and manners; that therefore, in reſpect of it, there is no *vis inſita* in the mind; for that, previous to education, we are in a ſtate of perfect indifference as to virtue and vice; and that an oppoſite courſe of education would have made us think that virtue which now we think vice, and that vice which now we think virtue: in a word, that moral ſentiments are as much the effect of cuſtom and human artifice, as our taſte in dreſs, furniture, and the modes of converſation. In proof of this doctrine, a multitude of facts have been brought together, to ſhow the prodigious diverſity, and even contrariety, that takes place in the moral opinions of different ages, nations, and climates. Of all our modern ſceptical notions, this ſeemed to me one of the moſt dangerous,

rous. For my own ſatisfaction, and for the ſake of thoſe whom it is my duty to inſtruct, I have been at great pains to examine it; and the examination has turned out to my entire ſatisfaction. But the materials I have collected on this ſubject are far too bulky to be inſerted here. The ſceptical arguments are founded, not only on miſtakes concerning the nature of virtue, but alſo on ſome hiſtorical facts miſrepreſented, and on others ſo equivocal, and bare of circumſtances, that they really have do meaning. From the number of hiſtorical, as well as philoſophical, diſquiſitions, which I found it neceſſary to introduce, the inquiry concerning the univerſality and immutability of moral truth, which I thought to have compriſed in a few pages, ſoon ſwelled into a treatiſe. I meant to have finiſhed it ſome years ago; but have hitherto been prevented by a number of unforeſeen accidents.

5. Of probable truth, a ſuperior being may think differently from us, and yet be in the right. For every propoſition is either true or falſe; and every probable paſt event has either happened, or not happened, as every probable future event will either happen or not happen. From the imperfection of our faculties, and from the narrowneſs of our experience,

perience, we may judge wrong, when we think that a certain event has happened, or will happen: and a being of more extenſive experience, and more perfect underſtanding, may ſee that we judge wrong; for that the event in queſtion never did happen, nor ever will. Yet it does not follow, that a man may either prudently or rationally diſtruſt his probable notions as fallacious. That which man, by the conſtitution of his nature, is determined to admit as probable, he ought to admit as probable; for, in regard to man, that is probable truth. Not to admit it probable, when at the ſame time he muſt believe it to be ſo, is mere obſtinacy: and not to believe that probable, which all other men who have the ſame view of all the circumſtances, believe probable, would be aſcribed to caprice, or want of underſtanding. If one in ſuch a caſe were refractory, we ſhould naturally aſk, How comes it, that you think differently from us in this matter? have you any reaſon to think us in a miſtake? is your knowledge of the circumſtances from which we infer the probability of this event, different from ours? do you know any thing about it, of which we are ignorant? If he reply in the negative, and yet perſiſt in contradicting our opinion, we ſhould certainly think him

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an unreaſonable man. Every thing, therefore, which to human creatures ſeems intuitively probable, is to be accounted one of the firſt principles of probable human knowledge. A human creature acts an irrational part when he argues againſt it; and if he refuſe to acknowledge it probable, he cannot, without contradicting himſelf, acquieſce in any other human probability whatſoever.

It appears from what has been ſaid, that there are various kinds of intuitive certainty; and that thoſe who will not allow any truth to be ſelf-evident, except what has all the characteriſtics of a geometrical axiom, are much miſtaken. From the view we have given of this ſubject, it would be eaſy to reduce theſe intuitive certainties into claſſes; but this is not neceſſary on the preſent occaſion. We are here treating of the nature and immutability of truth as perceived by human faculties. Whatever intuitive propoſition man, by the law of his nature, muſt believe as certain, or as probable, is, in regard to him, certain or probable truth; and muſt conſtitute a part of human knowledge, and remain unalterably the ſame, as long as the human conſtitution remains unaltered. And we muſt often repeat, that he who attempts to diſprove ſuch intuitive truth, or to make men ſceptical in regard to it, acts a

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part as inconſiſtent with ſound reaſoning, and as effectually ſubverſive of all human knowledge, as if he attempted to diſprove truths which he knew to be agreeable to the eternal and neceſſary relations of things. Whether the Deity can or cannot change theſe truths into falſhoods, we need not ſeek to determine, becauſe it is of no conſequence to us to know. It becomes us better to inqure, with humility and reverence, into what he has done, than vainly, and perhaps preſumptuouſly, into what he can do. Whatever he has been pleaſed to eſtabliſh in the univerſe, is as certainly eſtabliſhed, as if it were in itſelf unchangeable and from eternity; and, while he wills it to remain what he made it, is as permanent as his own nature.

CHAP. II.

The preceding theory rejected by ſceptical writers.

WE have ſeen, that mathematicians and natural philoſophers do, in effect, acknowledge the diſtinction between common ſenſe and reaſon, as above explained; admitting

mitting the dictates of the former as ultimate and unqueſtionable principles, and never attempting either to prove or to diſprove them by reaſoning. If we inquire a little into the genius of modern ſcepticiſm, we ſhall ſee, that, there, a very different plan of inveſtigation has been adopted. This will beſt appear by inſtances taken from that pretended philoſophy. But firſt let us offer a few general remarks.

SECTION I.

General Obſervations. Riſe and Progreſs of Modern Scepticiſm.

1. THE Carteſian philoſophy is to be conſidered as the ground-work of modern ſcepticiſm. The ſource of LOCKE's reaſoning againſt the ſeparate exiſtence of the ſecondary qualities of matter, of BERKELEY's reaſoning againſt the exiſtence of a material world, and of HUME's reaſoning againſt the exiſtence both of ſoul and body, may be found in the firſt part of the *Principia* of DES CARTES. Yet nothing ſeems to have been further from the intention of this worthy and moſt ingenious philoſo-

pher, than to give countenance to error, irreligion, or licentiouſneſs. He begins with doubting; but it is with a view to arrive at conviction: his ſucceſſors (ſome of them at leaſt) the further they advance in their ſyſtems, become more and more ſceptical; and at length the reader is told, to his infinite pleaſure and emolument, that the underſtanding, acting alone, does intirely ſubvert itſelf, and leaves not the loweſt degree of evidence in any propoſition whatſoever *.

The firſt thing a philoſopher ought to do, according to DES CARTES, is to diveſt himſelf of all prejudices, and all his former opinions; to reject the evidence of ſenſe, of intuition, and of mathematical demonſtration; to ſuppoſe that there is no God, nor heaven, nor earth; and that man has neither hands, nor feet, nor body;—in a word, he is to doubt of every thing of which it is poſſible to doubt, and to be perſuaded, that every thing is falſe which can poſſibly be conceived to be doubtful. Now there is only one point of which it is impoſſible to doubt, namely, That I, the perſon who doubts, am thinking. This propoſition, therefore, *I think*, and this only, may be taken for granted; and nothing elſe whatſoever is to be believed without proof.

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† Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 464.

What is to be expected from this ſtrange introduction? One or other of theſe two things muſt neceſſarily follow. This author will either believe nothing at all; or if he believe any thing, it muſt be upon the recommendation of falſe and ſophiſtical reaſoning.* But DES CARTES is no ſceptic in his moral reaſonings: therefore, in his moral reaſonings, he muſt be a ſophiſter. Let us ſee, whether we can make good this charge againſt him by facts.

Taking it for granted that he thinks, he thence infers, that he exiſts: *Ego cogito, ergo ſum:* I think; therefore I exiſt. Now there cannot be thought where there is no exiſtence; before he take it for granted that he thinks, he muſt alſo take it for granted that he exiſts. This argument, therefore, proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that the thing to be proved is true; in other words, it is a ſophiſm, a *petitio principii.* Even ſuppoſing it poſſible to conceive thinking, without at the ſame time conceiving exiſtence, ſtill this is no concluſive argument, except it could be ſhown, that it is more evident to a man that he thinks, than that he exiſts; for in every true proof a leſs evident propoſition is inferred from one that is more evident. But, *I think,* and, *I exiſt,* are equally evident. Therefore this is no true proof.—To ſet an example of falſe reaſoning

* See the firſt part of this Eſſay.

ſoning in the very foundation of a ſyſtem, can hardly fail to have bad conſequences.

Having in this manner eſtabliſhed his own exiſtence, our author next proceeds to prove the veracity of his faculties; that is, to ſhow by reaſoning, that what he thinks true, is really true, and that what he thinks falſe is really falſe. He would have done better to have taken this alſo for granted: the argument by which he attempts to prove it, does more honour to his heart than to his underſtanding. It is indeed a ſophiſm of the ſame kind with the former, in which he takes that for granted which he means to prove. It runs thus. We are conſcious, that we have in our minds the idea of a being infinitely perfect, intelligent, and powerful, neceſſarily exiſtent and eternal. This idea differs from all our other ideas in two reſpects:—It implies the notions of eternal and neceſſary exiſtence, and of infinite perfection;—it neither is, nor can be, a fiction of the imagination; and therefore exhibits no chimera or imaginary being, but a true and immutable nature, which muſt of neceſſity exiſt, becauſe neceſſary exiſtence is comprehended in the idea of it. Therefore there is a God, neceſſarily exiſtent, infinitely wiſe, powerful, and true, and poſſeſſed of all perfection. This Being is the maker of us and of all our faculties;

faculties; he cannot deceive, becauſe he is infinitely perfect; therefore our faculties are true, and not fallacious*.—The ſame argument has been adopted by others, particularly by Dr. Barrow. "Carteſius," ſays that pious and learned author, "hath well "obſerved, that, to make us abſolutely cer- "tain of our having attained the truth, it is "required to be known, whether our facul- "ties of apprehending and judging the truth, "be true; which can only be known from "the power, goodneſs, and truth of our "Creator †."

I object not to this argument for the divine exiſtence, drawn from the idea of an all-perfect being, of which the human mind is conſcious; though perhaps this is not the moſt unexceptionable method of evincing that great truth. I allow, that when a man believes a God, he cannot, without abſurdity and impiety, deny or queſtion the veracity of his own faculties; and that to acknowledge a diſtinction between truth and falſehood, implies a perſuaſion, that certain laws are eſtabliſhed in the univerſe, on which the natures of all created things depend, which (to me at leaſt) is incomprehenſible, except on

* Carteſii Princip. Philoſ. part 1. §. 14. 15. 18.
† Lect. Geomet. 7.

on the ſuppoſition of a ſupreme, intelligent, directing cauſe. But I acquieſce in theſe principles, becauſe I take the veracity of my faculties for granted; and this I feel myſelf neceſſitated to do, becauſe I feel it to be the law of my nature which I cannot poſſibly counteract. Proceeding then upon this innate and irreſiſtible notion, that my faculties are true, I infer, by the juſteſt reaſoning, that God exiſts; and the evidence for this great truth is ſo clear and convincing, that I cannot withſtand its force, if I believe any thing elſe whatſoever.

Des Cartes argues in a different manner. Becauſe God exiſts, (ſays he), and is perfect, therefore my faculties are true. Right.—But how do you know that God exiſts? I infer it from the ſecond principle of my philoſophy, already eſtabliſhed, *Cogito, ergo ſum.*—How do you know that your inference is juſt? It ſatisfies my reaſon.—Your argument proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that what ſatisfies your reaſon is true? It does.—Do you not then take it for granted, that your reaſon is not a fallacious, but a true faculty? This muſt be taken for granted, otherwiſe the argument is good for nothing. And if ſo, your argument proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that the point to be proved is true. In a word, you pretend to prove the truth

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of our faculties, by an argument which evidently and neceſſarily ſuppoſes their truth. Your philoſophy is built on ſophiſms; how then can it be according to common ſenſe?

As this philoſopher doubted where he ought to have been confident, ſo he is often confident where he ought to doubt. He admits not his own exiſtence, till he thinks he has proved it; yet his ſyſtem is replete with hypotheſes taken for granted, without proof, almoſt without examination. He ſets out with the profeſſion of univerſal ſcepticiſm; but many of his theories are founded in the moſt unphiloſophical credulity. Had he taken a little more for granted, he would have proved a great deal more: he takes almoſt nothing for granted, (I ſpeak of what he profeſſes, not of what he performs); and therefore he proves nothing. In geometry, however, he is rational and ingenius; there are ſome curious remarks in his diſcourſe on the paſſions; his phyſics are fanciful and plauſible; his treatiſe on muſic perſpicuous, though ſuperficial: a lively imagination ſeems to have been his chief talent; want of knowledge in the grounds of evidence his principal defect.

We are informed by Father MALEBRANCHE, that the ſenſes were at firſt as honeſt faculties as one could deſire to be endued

endued with, till after they were debauched by original ſin; an adventure, from which they contracted ſuch an invincible propenſity to cheating, that they are now continually lying in wait to deceive us. But there is in man, it ſeems, a certain clear-ſighted, ſtout, old faculty, called *reaſon*, which, without being deceived by appearances, keeps an eye upon the rogues, and often proves too cunning for them. MALEBRANCHE therefore adviſeth us to doubt with all our might. "If "a man has only learned to doubt," ſays he, "let him not imagine that he has made "an inconſiderable progreſs *." Progreſs! in what?---in ſcience? Is it not a contradiction, or at leaſt an inconſiſtency, in terms, to ſay that a man makes progreſs in ſcience by doubting †? If one were to aſk the way to Dublin, and to receive for anſwer, that he ought firſt of all to ſit down; for that if he had only learned to ſit ſtill, he might be aſſured, that he had made no inconſiderable progreſs in his journey; I ſuppoſe he would hardly trouble his informer with a ſecond queſtion.

It

* Qu'on ne s'imagine pas, que l'on ait peu avancé, ſi on a ſeulement appris à douter.

La Recherche de la Verité liv. 1. ch. 20.

† Eſt contrarietas inter verba *ſcivi*, et *dubia ſunt*.

Des Cartes, Object. et Reſponſ. ſeptimæ.

It is true, this author makes a diſtinction between the doubts of paſſion, brutality, and blindneſs, and thoſe of prudence, diſtruſt, and penetration: the former, ſays he, are the doubts of Academics and Atheiſts; the latter are the doubts of the true philoſopher *. It is true alſo, that he allows us to give an entire conſent to the things that appear entirely evident †. But he adopts, notwithſtanding, the principles of DES CARTES' firſt philoſophy, That we ought to begin our inquiries with univerſal doubt, taking only our own conſciouſneſs for granted, and thence inferring our exiſtence, and the exiſtence of God, and proving, from the divine veracity, that our faculties are not fallacious. Where-ever it is poſſible that a deluding ſpirit may deceive us, there, ſays MALEBRANCHE, we ought to doubt ‡; but a deluding ſpirit may deceive us where-ever our memory is employed in reaſoning; therefore, in all ſuch reaſonings, there may be error. And if ſo, there may be error in reaſoning

* Recherche de la Verité, liv. 1. ch. 20. ſect. 3.

† Qu'on ne doit jamais donner un conſentement entier, qu, à des choſes qui paroiſſent entierement evidentes. *Recherche de la Verité, liv. 1. ch. 20. ſect. 3.*—This is indeed a rational ſcepticiſm, ſuch as Ariſtotle recommends, and every friend to truth muſt approve.

‡ Id. liv. 6. ch. 6.

reaſoning of every kind; for without memory there can be no reaſoning: but in the truths diſcovered by a ſingle glance, (*connoiſſances de ſimple vuë*), ſuch as this, That two and two make four, it is not poſſible, he ſays, for a deluding god, (*dieu trompeur*), however powerful, to deceive him.—It is eaſy to ſee, that ſuch doctrines muſt lead either to ſophiſtry, or to univerſal ſcepticiſm, or rather to both. For if a demonſtrated concluſion may be falſe for any thing I know to the contrary, an axiom may be ſo too: my belief of the firſt is not leſs neceſſary, than my belief of the laſt. Intuition is, of all evidence, the cleareſt, and moſt immediately convincing; but demonſtration produces abſolute certainty, and full conviction, in the mind of him who underſtands it *.—MALEBRANCHE, indeed, acknowledges, that we may reaſon when once we know that God is no deceiver: but this, he ſays, muſt be known at one glance, (that is, I ſuppoſe, intuitively), or it cannot be known at all; for all reaſoning on this ſubject may be fallacious †.

But

* See the ſecond chapter of the firſt book of the latter Analytics of Ariſtotle. The great philoſopher holds, that intuition and demonſtration are equally productive of knowledge; though the former be the firſt, the cleareſt, and moſt immediate evidence.

† Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 6.

But I do not pretend to unfold all the falſe and ſceptical principles of this author's philoſophy. To confeſs the truth, I do not well underſtand it. He is generally myſtical; often, if I miſtake not, ſelf-contradictory; and his genius is ſtrangely warped by a ſuperſtitious veneration for the abſurdities of Popery. He rejects the evidence of ſenſe, becauſe it ſeems repugnant to his reaſon; he admits tranſubſtantiation, though certainly repugnant both to reaſon and ſenſe. Of Ariſtotle, and Seneca, and the other ancient philoſophers, he ſays, that their lights are nothing but thick darkneſs, and their moſt illuſtrious virtues, nothing but intolerable pride*. Fy, M. MALEBRANCHE! Popery, with all its abſurdities, requires not from its adherents ſo uncandid, and ſo illiberal, a declaration. An Ariſtotelian, of your own religion and country, and nearly of your own age, delivers a very different doctrine: "Ariſtotle, ſupported by philoſophy, hath "aſcended by the ſteps of motion even to "the knowledge of one firſt mover, who is "God. In order to arrive at the knowledge "of divine things, we muſt learn ſcience, "otherwiſe we ſhall fall into error. Phi"loſophy and theology bear teſtimony to, "and mutually, confirm, each other, and "pro-

* Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 6.

" produce a more perfect knowledge of the " truth: the latter teaches what we ought " to believe, and reaſon makes us believe it " more eaſily, and with greater ſteadineſs. " They are two lights, which, by their " union, yield a more brilliant luſtre than " either of them could yield ſingly, or both " if ſeparated. Moſes learned the philoſo- " phy of the Egyptians, and Daniel in Ba- " bylon that of the Chaldeans *." This learned and judicious Peripatetic goes on to ſhow, that Jerome, Auguſtine, Gregory of Nice, and Clemens Alexandrinus, entertained the ſame honourable opinion of the ancient philoſophers.—If DES CARTES, and his diſciple MALEBRANCHE, had ſtudied the ancients more, and indulged their own imagination leſs, they would have made a better figure in philoſophy, and done much more ſervice to mankind. But it was their aim to decry the ancients as much as poſſible: and ever ſince their time, it has been too much the faſhion to overlook the diſcoveries of former ages, as altogether unneceſſary to the improvement of the preſent. MALEBRANCHE often inveighs againſt Ariſtotle in particular, with the moſt virulent bitterneſs; and affects, on all occaſions, to treat him

* Bouju. Introduction à la Philoſophie, chap. 9. Paris 1614. folio.

treat him with ſupreme contempt *. Had this great ancient employed his genius in the ſubverſion of virtue, or in eſtabliſhing tenets incompatible with the principles of natural religion, he would have deſerved the ſevereſt cenſure. But MALEBRANCHE lays nothing of this kind to his charge; he only finds him guilty of ſome ſpeculative errors in natural philoſophy. Ariſtotle was not exempted from that fallibility which is incident to human nature; yet it would not be amiſs, if our modern wits would ſtudy him a little, before they venture to decide ſo poſitively on his abilites and character. It is obſervable, that he is moſt admired by thoſe who beſt underſtand him. Now, the contrary is true of our modern ſceptics: they are moſt admired by thoſe who read them leaſt, and who take their characters upon truſt, as they find them delivered in coffee-houſes and drawing-rooms, and other places of faſhionable converſation, whoſe doctrines do ſo much honour to the virtue and good ſenſe of this enlightened age.

I have ſometimes heard the principles of the Socratic ſchool urged as a precedent to juſtify our modern ſceptics. Modern ſcepticiſm is of two kinds, unlike in their nature,

* See Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 5.

ture, though the one be the foundation of the other. DES CARTES begins with universal doubt, that in the end he may arrive at conviction: HUME begins with hypothesis, and ends with universal doubt. Now, does not Aristotle propose, that all investigation should begin with doubt? And does not Socrates affirm, that he knows nothing certainly, except his own ignorance?

All this is true. Aristotle proposes, that investigation should begin with doubt *. He compares doubting to a knot, which it is the end of investigation to disintangle; and there can be no solution, where there is no knot or difficulty to be solved. But Aristotle's doubt is quite of a different nature from that of DES CARTES. The former admits as true whatever is self-evident, without seeking to prove it; nay, he affirms, that those men who attempt to prove self-evident principles, or who think that such principles may be proved, are ignorant of the nature of proof †. It differs also most essentially from the scepticism of Mr. HUME. The reasonings of this author all terminate in doubt; whereas Aristotle's constant aim is, to discover truth, and establish conviction.

* Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 3. cap. 1. Λύειν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγνοῦντα τὸν δεσμόν, &c.

† Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 4. cap. 4.

tion. He defines philoſophy *the ſcience of Truth*; divides it into ſpeculative and practical: and expreſsly declares, that truth is the end of the former, and action of the latter*.

Cicero, in order to compliment a ſect, of which, however, he was not a conſiſtent diſciple, aſcribes to Socrates a very high degree of ſcepticiſm †; making his principles nearly the ſame with thoſe of the New Academy, who profeſſed to believe, that all things are ſo involved in darkneſs, that nothing can be known with certainty. The only difference between them, according to Cicero in this place, is, that Socrates affirmed, that he knew nothing but his own ignorance: whereas Arceſilas and the reſt of the New Academy, held, that man could know nothing, not even his own ignorance, with certainty; and therefore, that affirmation of every kind is abſurd and unphiloſophical. But we need not take this on the authority of Cicero; as we have acceſs to the ſame original authors from whom he received his information. And if we conſult them, particularly Xenophon, the moſt unexceptionable of them

* Ὀρθῶς δ' ἔχει καὶ τὸ καλεῖσαι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἀληθείας. Θεωρητικὴ μὲν γὰρ τέλος ἀλήθεια, πρακτικὴς, δ' ἔργον.

Metaphyſ. lib. 2. cap. 1.

† Cic. Academ. lib. 1. cap. 12.

them all in point of veracity, we ſhall find, that the reaſonings, the ſentiments, and the conduct of Socrates, are altogether incompatible with ſcepticiſm. The firſt ſcience that engaged his attention was natural philoſophy; which, as it was taught in thoſe days by Zeno, Anaxagoras, and Xenophanes, had very little to recommend it to a man of ſenſe and candour. Socrates ſoon relinquiſhed it, from a perſuaſion that it was at once unprofitable, and founded in uncertainty; and employed the reſt of his life in the cultivation of moral philoſophy, a ſcience which to him ſeemed more ſatisfactory in its evidence, and more uſeful in its application*. So far was he from being ſceptical in regard to the principles of moral duty, that he inculcated them with earneſtneſs where-ever he found opportunity, and thought it incumbent on every man to make himſelf acquainted with them. In his reaſonings, indeed, he did not formally lay down any principle, becauſe it was his method to deduce his concluſions from what was acknowledged by his antagoniſt: but is this any proof, that he himſelf did not believe his own concluſions? Read the ſtory of his life; his conduct never belied his principles: obſerve the manners of

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1. et lib. 4. cap. 7.

of our ſceptics; their conduct and principles do mutually and invariably bely one another. Do you ſeek ſtill more convincing evidence, that Socrates felt, believed, and avowed the truth? Read the defence he made before his judges. See you there any ſigns of doubt, heſitation or fear? any ſuſpicion of the poſſibility of his being in the wrong? any diſſimulation, ſophiſtry, or art? See you not, on the contrary, the utmoſt plainneſs and ſimplicity, the calmeſt and moſt deliberate fortitude, and that noble aſſurance which ſo well becomes the cauſe of truth and virtue? Few men have ſhown ſo ſo firm an attachment to truth, as to lay down their life for its ſake: yet this did Socrates. He made no external profeſſion of any philoſophical creed; but in his death, and through the whole of his life, he ſhowed the ſteadieſt adherence to principle; and his principles were all conſiſtent. Xenophon has recorded many of theſe; and tells us, in regard to ſome of them, that Socrates ſcrupled not to call thoſe men fools who differed from his opinion*.---The ſophiſts of his age were not ſolicitous to diſcover truth, but only to confute an adverſary, and reaſon plauſibly in behalf of their theories. That they might

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1. paſſim.

have the ampler field for this ſort of ſpeculation, they confined themſelves, like our modern metaphyſicians, to general topics, ſuch as the nature of good, of beauty, and the like; on which one may ſay a great many things with little meaning, and offer a variety of arguments without one word of truth. Socrates did much to diſcredit this abuſe of ſcience. In his converſations he did not trouble himſelf with the niceties of artificial logic. His aim was, not to confute an adverſary, nor to guard againſt that verbal confutation which the ſophiſts were perpetually attempting, but to do good to thoſe with whom he converſed, by laying their duty before them in a ſtriking and perſuaſive manner*. He was not fond of reaſoning on abſtract ſubjects, eſpecially when he had to do with a ſophiſt; well knowing, that this could anſwer no other purpoſe than to furniſh matter for endleſs and unprofitable logomachy. When, therefore, Ariſtippus aſked him concerning the nature of good †, with a view to confute, or at leaſt to teaſe him, with quibbling evaſions, Socrates declined

* Ἀρίστιππον δὲ ἐπιχειροῦντος ἐλέγχειν τὸν Σωκράτη,—βουλόμενος τὴν συνόντας ὠφελεῖν ὁ Σωκράτης ἀπεκρίνατο, ὥστε οἱ φυλαττόμενοι, μὴ πη ὁ λόγος ἐπαλλαχθῇ, ἀλλ' ὡς ἂν πεπεισμένοι μάλιστα πρᾶττοιεν τὰ δέοντα.

Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 3. cap. 8.

† Id. Ibid.

clined to anſwer in general terms; and deſired the ſophiſt to limit his queſtion, by confining the word *good* to ſome particular thing. Do you aſk me, ſays he, what is good for a fever, for ſore eyes, or for hunger? No, ſays the ſophiſt. If, replies he, you aſk me concerning the nature of a good which is good for no particular purpoſe, I tell you once for all, that I know of none ſuch, and have no deſires after it. In like manner, he anſwers to the general queſtion concerning beauty, by deſiring his adverſary to confine himſelf to ſome particular kind of beauty. What would the great moraliſt have thought of thoſe modern metaphyſical treatiſes, which ſeem to have nothing elſe in view, but to contrive vain and queſtionable definitions of general ideas! Simple, certain, and uſeful truth, was the conſtant, and the only, object of this philoſopher's inquiry.

True it is, he ſometimes ſaid, that he knew nothing but his own ignorance. And ſurely the higheſt attainments in human knowledge are imperfect and unſatisfying. Yet man knows ſomething: Socrates was conſcious that he knew ſomething; otherwiſe Xenophon would not have aſſerted, that his opinions concerning God, and Providence, and Religion, and Moral Duty, were

well known to all the Athenians*. But Socrates was humble, and made no pretenſions to any thing extraordinary, either in virtue or in knowledge. He profeſſed no ſcience; he inſtructed others, without pedantry, and without parade; exemplifying the beauty and the practicability of virtue, by the innocence and integrity of his life, and by the charms of an inſtructive, though moſt inſinuating, converſation †. I ſhall allow our modern ſceptics to avail themſelves all they can of the authority of DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE, of Pyrrho and Anaxarchus; but let them not preſume to ſanctify their traſh with the venerable names of Socrates and Ariſtotle.

Cicero ſeems to have been an Academic rather in name than in reality. And I am apt to think, from ſeveral paſſages in his works ‡, that he made choice of this denomination, in order to have a pretence for reaſoning on either ſide of every queſtion, and conſequently an ampler field for a diſplay of his rhetorical talents §. To Pyrrho,

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1.

† Ibid. cap. 2.

‡ See particularly *De Officiis, lib.* 3. *cap.* 4. *De Fato, cap.* 2.

§ See this point illuſtrated in REMARKS UPON A DISCOURSE OF FREETHINKING, &c. By *Philelutherus Lipſienſis* (*Dr. Bentley*) Edit. 7th. pag. 262.

Pyrrho, Herillus, Ariſto, and other ſceptics, who, by aſſerting that all things are indifferent, deſtroy the diſtinction of virtue and vice, he will not allow even the name of philoſopher: nay, he inſinuates that it is impudence in ſuch perſons to pretend to it*. "I wiſh," ſays he in another place, "that they who ſuppoſe me "a ſceptic were ſufficiently acquainted with "my ſentiments. For I am not one of thoſe "whoſe mind wanders in error, without any "fixed principle. For what ſort of under-"ſtanding muſt that man poſſeſs, what ſort of "life muſt that man lead, who, by diveſting "himſelf of principle, diveſts himſelf of the "means, both of reaſoning and of living†!" Let it be obſerved alſo, that when the ſubject of his inquiry is of high importance, as in his books on moral duties, and on the nature of the gods, he follows the doctrine of the Dogmatiſts, particularly the Stoics; and aſſerts his moral and religious principles with a warmth and energy which prove him to have been in earneſt.

2. Nothing

* De officiis, lib. 1. cap. 2.

† Quibus vellem ſatis cognita eſſet noſtra ſententia. Non enim ſumus ii, quorum vagetur animus errore, nec habeat unquam quid ſequatur. Quæ enim eſſet iſta mens, vel quæ vita potius, non modo diſputandi, ſed vivendi ratione ſublata! *Cic. De Officiis, lib. 2. cap. 2.*

2. Nothing was further from the intention of LOCKE, than to encourage verbal controverſy, or advance doctrines favourable to ſcepticiſm. To do good to mankind, by inforcing virtue, illuſtrating truth, and vindicating liberty, was his ſincere purpoſe: and he did not labour in vain. His writings are to be reckoned among the few books that have been productive of real utility to mankind. But candour obliges me to remark, that ſome of his tenets ſeem to be too raſhly admitted, for the ſake of a favourite hypotheſis. That ſome of them have promoted ſcepticiſm, is undeniable. He ſeems indeed to have been ſenſible, that there were inaccuracies in his work; and candidly owns, that "ſome haſty and indigeſted thoughts on "a ſubject never before conſidered, gave the "firſt entrance to his Eſſay; which, being "begun by chance, was continued by in-"treaty, written by incoherent parcels, and "after long intervals of neglect reſumed "again, as humour or occaſion permitted.*."

The firſt book of his Eſſay, which, with ſubmiſſion, I think the worſt, tends to eſtabliſh this dangerous doctrine, That the human mind, previous to education and habit,

* Preface to the Eſſay on Human Underſtanding.

bit, is as ſuſceptible of any one impreſſion as of any other: a doctrine which, if true, would go near to prove, that truth and virtue are no better than human contrivances; or, at leaſt, that they have nothing permanent in their nature, but may be as changeable as the inclinations and capacities of men; and that, as we underſtand the term, there is no ſuch thing as common ſenſe in the world. Surely this is not the doctrine that LOCKE meant to eſtabliſh; but his zeal againſt innate ideas, and innate principles, put him off his guard, and made him allow too little to inſtinct, for fear of allowing too much. This controverſy, ſo far as it regards moral ſentiment, we have examined in another place. At preſent we would only obſerve, that if truth be any thing permanent, which it muſt be if it be any thing at all, thoſe perceptions or impulſes of underſtanding, by which we become conſcious of it, muſt be equally permanent; which they could not be, if they depended on education, and if there were not a law of nature, independent on man, which determines the underſtanding in ſome caſes to believe, in others to diſbelieve. Is it poſſible to imagine, that any courſe of education could ever bring a rational creature to believe, that two and two are equal to three, that he is not the ſame perſon

to-day

to-day he was yeſterday, that the ground he ſtands on does not exiſt? could make him diſbelieve the teſtimony of his own ſenſes, or that of other men? could make him expect unlike events in like circumſtances? or that the courſe of nature, of which he has hitherto had experience, will be changed, even when he foreſees no cauſe to hinder its continuance? I can no more believe, that education could produce ſuch a depravity of judgment, than that education could make me ſee all human bodies in an inverted poſition, or hear with my noſtrils, or take pleaſure in burning or cutting my fleſh. Why ſhould not our judgments concerning truth be acknowledged to reſult from a bias impreſſed upon the mind by its Creator, as well as our deſire of ſelf-preſervation, our love of ſociety, our reſentment of injury, our joy in the poſſeſſion of good? If thoſe judgments be not inſtinctive, I ſhould be glad to know how they come to be univerſal; the modes of ſentiment and behaviour produced by education are uniform only where education is uniform; but there are many truths which have obtained univerſal acknowledgment in all ages and nations. If thoſe judgments be not inſtinctive, I ſhould be glad to know how men find it ſo difficult, or rather impoſſible, to lay them

them aſide: the falſe opinions we imbibe from habit and education, may be, and often are, relinquiſhed by thoſe who make a proper uſe of their reaſon; and the man who thus renounces former prejudices, upon conviction of their falſity, is applauded by all as a man of candour, ſenſe, and ſpirit; but if one were to ſuffer himſelf to be argued out of his common ſenſe, the whole world would pronounce him a fool.

The ſubſtance, or at leaſt the foundation, of BERKELEY's argument againſt the exiſtence of matter, may be found in LOCKE's Eſſay, and in the *Principia* of DES CARTES. And if this argument be concluſive, it proves that to be falſe which every man muſt neceſſarily believe every moment of his life to be true, and that to be true which no man ſince the foundation of the world was ever capable of believing for a ſingle moment. BERKELEY's doctrine attacks the moſt inconteſtable dictates of common ſenſe; and pretends to demonſtrate, that the cleareſt principles of human conviction, and thoſe which have determined the judgment of all men in all ages, and by which the judgment of all rational men muſt be determined, are certainly fallacious.

Mr. HUME, more ſubtle, and leſs reſerved, than any of his predeceſſors, hath gone

ſtill

ſtill greater lengths in the demolition of common ſenſe; and reared in its place a moſt tremendous fabric of doctrine; upon which, if it were not for the flimſineſs of its materials, engines might eaſily be erected, ſufficient to overturn all belief, ſcience, religion, virtue, and ſociety, from the very foundation. He calls this work, "A Treatiſe of Human Nature; being an attempt "to introduce the experimental method of "reaſoning into moral ſubjects." This is, in the ſtyle of Edmund Curl, a *taking title page*; but, alas; "Fronti nulla fides!" The whole of this author's ſyſtem is founded on a falſe hypotheſis taken for granted; and whenever a fact contradictory to that falſe hypotheſis occurs to his obſervation, he either denies it, or labours hard to explain it away. This, it ſeems, in his judgment, is experimental reaſoning: in mine, it is juſt the reverſe.

He begins his book with affirming, That all the perceptions of the human mind reſolve themſelves into two claſſes, impreſſions and ideas; that the latter are all copied from the former; and that an idea differs from its correſpondent impreſſion only in being a weaker perception. Thus, when I ſit by the fire, I have an impreſſion of heat, and I can form an idea of heat when I am ſhivering

vering with cold; in the one caſe I have a ſtronger perception of heat, in the other a weaker. Is there any warmth in this idea of heat? There muſt, according to Mr. HUME's doctrine; only the warmth of the idea is not quite ſo ſtrong as that of the impreſſion. For this profound author repeats it again and again, that an idea is by its nature weaker and fainter than an impreſſion, but is in every other reſpect (not only ſimilar, but) the ſame *. Nay, he goes further, and ſays, that whatever is true of the one muſt be acknowledged concerning the other †; and he is ſo confident of the truth of this maxim, that he makes it one of the pillars of his philoſophy. To thoſe who may be inclined to admit this maxim on his authority, I would propoſe a few plain queſtions. Do you feel any, even the leaſt, warmth, in the idea of a bonfire, a burning mountain, or the general conflagration? Do you feel more real cold in Virgil's Scythian winter, than in Milton's deſcription of the flames of hell? Do you acknowledge that to be true of the idea of eating, which is certainly true of the impreſſion of it, that it alleviates hunger, fills the belly, and contributes to the ſupport of human

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 131.
† Ibid. p. 41.

man life? If you anſwer theſe queſtions in the negative, you deny one of the fundamental principles of Mr. HUME's philoſophy. We have, it is true, a livelier perception of a friend when we ſee him, than when we think of him in his abſence. But this is not all: every perſon of a ſound mind knows, that in the one caſe we believe, and are certain, that the object exiſts, and is preſent with us; in the other we believe, and are certain, that the object is not preſent: which, however, Mr. HUME muſt deny; for he maintains, that an idea differs from an impreſſion only in being weaker, and in no other reſpect whatſoever.

That every idea ſhould be a copy and reſemblance of the impreſſion whence it is derived;—that, for example, the idea of red ſhould be a red idea; the idea of a roaring lion a roaring idea; the idea of an aſs, a hairy, long-eared, ſluggiſh idea, patient of labour, and much addicted to thiſtles; that the idea of extenſion ſhould be extended, and that of ſolidity ſolid;—that a thought of the mind ſhould be endued with all, or any, of the qualities of matter,—is, in my judgment, inconceivable and impoſſible. Yet Mr. HUME takes it for granted; and it is another of his fundamental maxims. Such is the credulity of Scepticiſm!

If every idea be an exact reſemblance of its correſpondent impreſſion, (or object; for theſe terms according to this author, amount to the ſame thing *);---if the idea of whiteneſs be white, of ſolidity ſolid, and of extenſion extended, as the ſame author allows †;---then the idea of a line, the ſhorteſt that ſenſe can perceive, muſt be equal in length to the line itſelf; for if ſhorter, it would be imperceptible; and it will not be ſaid, either that an imperceptible idea can be perceived, or that the idea of an imperceptible object can be formed:——— conſequently the idea of a line a hundred times as long, muſt be a hundred times as long as the former idea; for if ſhorter, it would be the idea, not of this, but of ſome other ſhorter line. And ſo it clearly follows, nay it admits of mathematical demonſtration, that the idea of an inch is really an inch long; and that of a mile, a mile long. In a word, every idea of any particular extenſion is equal in length to the extended object. The ſame reaſoning holds good in regard to the other dimenſions of breadth and thickneſs. All ideas, therefore, of

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 1, 2, 362.
† Ibid. p. 416, 417.

of ſolid objects, muſt be (according to Mr. HUME's philoſophy) equal in magnitude and ſolidity to the objects themſelves. Now mark the conſequence. I am juſt now in an apartment containing a thouſand cubic feet, being ten feet ſquare, and ten high; the door and windows are ſhut, as well as my eyes and ears. Mr. HUME will allow, that, in this ſituation, I may form ideas, not only of the viſible appearance, but alſo of the real tangible magnitude of the whole houſe, of a firſt-rate man of war, of St. Paul's cathedral, or even of a much larger object. But the ſolid magnitude of theſe ideas is equal to the ſolid magnitude of the objects from which they are copied: therefore I have now preſent with me an idea, that is, a ſolid extended thing, whoſe dimenſions extend to a million of cubic feet at leaſt. The queſtion now is, where is this thing placed? for a place it certainly muſt have, and a pretty large one too. I ſhould anſwer, in my mind; for I know not where elſe the ideas of my mind can be ſo conveniently depoſited. Now my mind is lodged in a body of no extraordinary dimenſions, and my body is contained in a room ten feet ſquare and ten feet high. It ſeems then, that, into this room, I have it in my power at pleaſure

ſure to introduce a ſolid object a thouſand, or ten thouſand, times larger than the room itſelf. I contemplate it a while, and then, by another volition, ſend it a packing, to make way for another object of equal or ſuperior magnitude. Nay, in no larger vehicle than a common poſt-chaiſe, I can tranſport from one end of the kingdom to the other, a building equal to the largeſt Egyptian pyramid, and a mountain as big as the peak of Teneriff.---Take care, ye diſciples of HUME, and be very well adviſed before ye reject this myſtery as impoſſible and incomprehenſible. It is geometrically deduced from the principles, nay from the firſt principles, of your maſter. By denying this, you give his ſyſtem ſuch a ſtab as it cannot ſurvive.

Say, ye candid and intelligent, what are we to expect from a logical and ſyſtematic treatiſe founded on a ſuppoſition, that a part may be ten or a hundred thouſand times greater than the whole? Shall we expect truth? Then it muſt be inferred by falſe reaſoning.---Shall we expect ſound reaſoning? Then ſurely the inferences muſt be falſe.—Indeed, though I cannot much admire this author's ſagacity on the preſent occaſion, I muſt confeſs myſelf not a little aſtoniſhed at his courage. A witch going to ſea in an egg-

egg-ſhell, or preparing to take a trip through the air on a broom-ſtick, would be a ſurpriſing phenomenon; but it is nothing to Mr. HUME, on ſuch a bottom, "launching "out (as he ſomewhere expreſſes it) into "the immenſe depths of philoſophy."

To multiply examples for the confutation of ſo glaring an abſurdity, is really ridiculous. I therefore leave it to the reader to determine, whether, if this doctrine of ſolid and extended ideas be true, it will not follow, that the idea of a roaring lion muſt emit audible ſound, almoſt, if not altogether, as loud and as terrible, as the royal beaſt in perſon could exhibit;---that two ideal bottles of brandy will intoxicate as far at leaſt as two genuine bottles of wine;---and that I muſt be greatly hurt, if not daſhed to pieces, if I am ſo imprudent, as to form only the idea of a bomb burſting under my feet. For has not our author ſaid, that, "impreſſions "and ideas comprehend all the perceptions "(or objects) of the human mind; that "whatſoever is true of the one muſt be ac-"knowledged concerning the other; nay, "that they are in every reſpect the ſame, "except that the former ſtrike with more "force than the latter?"

The abſurdity and inconceivableneſs of the diſtinction between objects and perceptions

tions is another of our author's capital doctrines. "Philoſophers," ſays he, "have "diſtinguiſhed between objects, and per- "ception, of the ſenſes; but this diſtinction "is not comprehended by *the generality of* "*mankind.*"* Now how are we to know, whether this diſtinction be conceived and acknowledged by *the generality?* If we put the queſtion to any of them, we ſhall find it no eaſy matter to make ourſelves underſtood, and, after all, perhaps be laughed at for our

 pains.

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. I. p. 353. 365. The word *perception* (and the ſame is true of the words *ſenſation*, *ſmell*, *taſte*, and many others) has, in common language, two, and ſometimes three, diſtinct ſignifications. It means, 1. The thing perceived. Thus we ſpeak of the *taſte* of a fig, the *ſmell* of a roſe. 2. The power or faculty perceiving; as when we ſay, "I have loſt my *ſmell* by a ſevere "cold, and therefore my *taſte* is not ſo quick as uſual." 3. It ſometimes denotes that impulſe or impreſſion which is communicated to the mind by the external object operating upon it through the organ of ſenſation. Thus we ſpeak of a *ſweet* or *bitter taſte*, a *diſtinct* or *confuſed*, a *clear* or *obſcure*, *ſenſation* or *perception*. Moſt of our ſceptical philoſophers have either been ignorant of, or inattentive to, this diſtinction: MALEBRANCHE, indeed, (liv. 1. ch. 10.) ſeems to have had ſome notion of it; but either I do not underſtand this author, or there is a ſtrange obſcurity and want of preciſion in almoſt every thing he ſays. Mr. HUME's philoſophy does not allow this to be a rational diſtinction; ſo that it is impoſſible to know preciſely what he means by the word *perception* in this and many other places. I have proved, however, that his aſſertion is falſe, whatever ſenſe (conſiſtent with common uſe) we affix to the word.

pains. Shall we reaſon *a priori* about their ſentiments and comprehenſions? this is often Mr. HUME's method; but it is neither philoſophical nor fair. Will you allow me to reckon myſelf one of *the generality?* Then I declare, for my own part, that I do comprehend and acknowledge this diſtinction, and have done ſo ever ſince I was capable of reflection. I remember when a child, to have had my fingers ſcorched with burning coals, and ſtung by bees: but I never confounded the object with the perception; I never thought that the pain I felt could either make honey or melt lead.—The inſtance, you ſay, is ſomewhat equivocal.—Then, I hope the following is explicit enough.

Suppoſe me to addreſs the common people in theſe words: "I ſee a ſtrange ſight "a little way off; but my ſight is weak, "ſo that I ſee it imperfectly; let me go "nearer that I may have a more diſtinct "ſight of it."——If the generality of mankind be at all incapable of diſtinguiſhing between the object and the perception, this incapacity will doubtleſs diſcover itſelf moſt, when ambiguous words are uſed on purpoſe to confound their ideas; but if their ideas on this ſubject are not confounded even by ambiguous language, there is reaſon to think, that they are extremely clear, diſtinct, and accurate.

accurate. Now I have here propoſed a ſentence, in which there is a ſtudied ambiguity of language; and yet I maintain, that every perſon of common ſenſe, who underſtands Engliſh, will inſtantly, on hearing theſe words, perceieve that by the word *fight* I mean, in the firſt clauſe, the thing ſeen; in the ſecond the power, or perhaps the organ, of ſeeing; in the third, the perception itſelf, as diſtinguiſhed both from the percipient faculty, and from the viſible object *. If one of the

* To every perſon of common ſenſe this diſtinction is in reality and practice quite familiar. But as the words we uſe in expreſſing it are of ambiguous ſignification, it is not eaſy to write about it ſo as to be immediately underſtood by every reader.—The thing ſeen or perceived is ſomething permanent and external, and is believed to exiſt, whether perceived or not; the faculty of ſeeing or perceiving is alſo ſomething permanent in the mind, and is believed to exiſt whether exerted or not; but what I here call *the perception itſelf* is temporary, and is conceived to have no exiſtence but in the mind that perceives it, and to exiſt no longer than while it is perceived; for in being perceived, its very eſſence does conſiſt; ſo that *to be*, and *to be perceived*, when predicated of it, do mean preciſely the ſame thing. Thus, I juſt now ſee this paper, which I call the external object: I turn away, or ſhut my eyes, and then I ſee it no longer, but I ſtill believe it to exiſt; though buried an hundred fathom deep in the earth, or left in an uninhabitable iſland, its exiſtence would be as real, as if it were gazed at by ten thouſand men. Again, when I ſhut my eyes, or tie a bandage over them, or go into a dark place, I ſee no longer; that is, my faculty of ſeeing acts, or is acted upon, no longer; but I ſtill believe it to remain in my mind, ready to act, or to be acted upon, whenever it is again placed

in

multitude, on hearing me pronounce this ſentence, were to reply as follows; "The "ſight is not at all ſtrange; it is a man on "horſeback: but your ſight muſt needs "be weak, as you are lately recovered from "ſickneſs: however, if you wait a little "till the man and horſe, which are now in "the ſhade, come into the ſunſhine, you "will then have a much more diſtinct ſight "of them:"——I would aſk, is the ſtudy of any part of philoſophy neceſſary to make a man comprehend the meaning of theſe two ſentences? Is there any thing abſurd or unintelligible either in the former or in the latter? Is there any thing in the reply, that ſeems to exceed the capacity of the vulgar, and ſuppoſes them to be more acute than they really are? If there be not, and I am certain

in the proper circumſtances; for nobody ſuppoſes, that by ſhutting our eyes, or going into a dark place, we annihilate our faculty of ſeeing. But thirdly, my *perception* of this paper is no permanent thing; nor has it any exiſtence, but while it is perceived; nor does it at all exiſt but in the mind that perceives it; I can put an end to, or annihilate it, whenever I pleaſe, by ſhutting my eyes; and I can at pleaſure renew it again by opening them.—It is really aſtoniſhing, that ſo many of our modern philoſophers ſhould have overlooked a diſtinction, which is of ſo great importance, that if we were unacquainted with it, a great part of human language would ſeem to be perfect nonſenſe. Such an overſight would be unpardonable in a dictionary-maker; but, I know not how it is, ſome of our philoſophers have been admired and celebrated for their acumen in committing it.

certain there is not, here is an unqueſtionable proof, that the vulgar, and indeed all men whom metaphyſic has not deprived of their ſenſes, do diſtinguiſh between the object perceived, the faculty perceiving, and the perception or impulſe communicated by the external object to the mind through the organ of ſenſation. What though all the three are ſometimes expreſſed by the ſame name? This only ſhows, that accuracy of language is not always neceſſary for anſwering the common purpoſes of life. If the ideas of the vulgar are ſufficiently diſtinct, notwithſtanding, what ſhall we ſay of that philoſopher, whoſe ideas are really confounded by this inaccuracy, and who, becauſe there is no difference in the ſigns, imagines that there is none in the things ſignified! That the underſtanding of ſuch a philoſopher is not a vulgar one, will be readily allowed; whether it exceeds, or falls ſhort, let the reader determine.*

This

* Mr. HUME is not always conſiſtent with himſelf in affirming, that the vulgar do not comprehend the diſtinction between perceptions and objects. "It is not," he ſays, vol. 1. p. 337, "by arguments, that children, peaſants, and "the greateſt part of mankind, are induced to attribute ob-"jects to ſome impreſſions, and deny them to others"—So! it ſeems the greateſt part of mankind do acknowledge a diſtinction between objects and perceptions, "Accordingly "we

This author's method of inveſtigation is no leſs extraordinary than his fundamental principles. There are many notions in the human mind, of which it is not eaſy perhaps to explain the origin. If you can deſcribe in words what were the circumſtances in which you

" we find, that all the concluſions which the vulgar form on " this head, are directly contrary to thoſe which are con- " firmed by philoſophy."—The more ſhame to that philoſophy! ſay I.—" For philoſophy informs us, that every thing " which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, " and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind; whereas " the vulgar confound perceptions and objects."—that is, I ſuppoſe, do not diſtinguiſh the former from the latter.—How! in the laſt ſentence it was ſaid, that the greateſt part of mankind do diſtinguiſh between impreſſions (which are a ſpecies of perceptions) and objects,—" and attribute a diſtinct continued " exiſtence to the very things they feel or ſee."——So, now again the objects have a diſtinct continued exiſtence; that is, are ſomething different from perceptions, which every body knows have no continued exiſtence. Here Mr. HUME, within the compaſs of half a page, contradicts himſelf, and contradicts that contradiction, and finally acquieſces in the firſt contradiction. To hunt ſuch a writer through ſo many ſhiftings and doublings, is not worth the reader's while nor mine. I hope we both know how to employ our time to better purpoſe. How often our author may affirm and deny, and deny and affirm, this doctrine, in the courſe of his work, I neither know nor care: it is certain, that, upon the whole, he holds the diſtinction between objects and perceptions to be *unreaſonable* (p. 338.), *unphiloſophical*, (ibid.), and *unſupported by the evidence of ſenſe*, (p. 330.—337.)——And indeed, when this diſtinction, as we have explained it, is acknowledged, and attended to, all BERKELEY's pretended demonſtration of the non-exiſtence of matter, and all HUME's reaſonings againſt the exiſtence both of matter and ſpirit, appear to be no better than a play upon words. For this key unlocks that whole myſtery of ſophiſm and quibble.

you received an impreſſion of any particular notion, it is well; Mr. HUME will allow that you may form an idea of it. But if you cannot do this, then ſays he, there is no ſuch notion in your mind; for all perceptions are either impreſſions or ideas, and it is not poſſible for us ſo much as to conceive any thing ſpecifically different from ideas and impreſſions *; now all ideas are copied from impreſſions: therefore you can have no idea nor conception of any thing of which you have not received an impreſſion.---All mankind have a notion of power or energy. No ſays Mr. HUME; an impreſſion of power or energy was never received by any man, and therefore an idea of it can never be formed in the human mind. If you inſiſt on your experience and conſciouſneſs of power, it is all a miſtake: his hypotheſis admits not the idea of power, and therefore there is no ſuch idea †.---All mankind have an idea of ſelf. That I deny, ſays Mr. HUME; I maintain, that no man ever had, or can have, an impreſſion of ſelf; and therefore no man can form any idea of it ‡. If you perſiſt, and ſay, that certainly you have ſome notion or idea of

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 123.
† Ibid. p. 282.
‡ Ibid. p. 437. 438.

of yourſelf: My dear Sir, he would ſay, you do not conſider, that this aſſertion contradicts my hypotheſis of impreſſions and ideas; how then is it poſſible it ſhould be true! This, it ſeems, is experimental reaſoning!

But though Mr. HUME deny, that I have any notion of ſelf, ſurely he does not mean to affirm, that I do not exiſt, or that I have no notion of myſelf as an exiſtent being. In truth, it is not eaſy to ſay what he means on this ſubject. Moſt philoſophical ſubjects become obſcure in the hands of this author; for he has a notable talent at puzzling his readers and himſelf: but when he treats of conſciouſneſs, of perſonal identity, and of the nature of the ſoul, he expreſſes himſelf ſo ſtrangely, that his words either have no meaning, or imply a contradiction. "The "queſtion," ſays he, "concerning the ſub-"ſtance of the ſoul is unintelligible*."---- Well, Sir, if you think ſo, you may let it alone.---No; that muſt not be neither. "What we call a *mind*, is nothing but a "heap or collection of different perceptions "(or objects) united together by certain re-"lations, and ſuppoſed, though falſely, to "be endowed with perfect ſimplicity and "identity.

* Treatiſe of human nature, vol. 1. p. 434. 435.

" identity*.—If any one, upon ſerious and " unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a " different notion of himſelf, I muſt con- " feſs I can reaſon with him no longer. " All I can allow him is, that he may be in " the right as well as I, and that we are " eſſentially different in this particular. He " may perhaps perceive ſomething ſimple " and continued, which he calls *himſelf*; " though I am certain there is no ſuch prin- " ciple in me. But ſetting aſide ſome me- " taphyſicians of this kind,"—that is, who feel and believe, that they have a ſoul,—— " I may venture to affirm of the reſt of man- " kind, that they are nothing but a bundle " or collection of different perceptions, " which ſucceed each other with inconceiv- " able rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux " and movement.——There is properly no " ſimplicity in the mind at one time, nor " identity in different (times), whatever na- " tural propenſion we may have to imagine " that ſimplicity and identity.—They are the " ſucceſſive perceptions only that conſtitute " the mind †."

If theſe words have any meaning, it is this: My ſoul (or rather that which I call my

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 361, 362.
† Ibid. p. 438, 439, 440.

my ſoul) is not one ſimple thing, nor is it the ſame thing to-day it was yeſterday; nay, it is not the ſame this moment it was the laſt; it is nothing but a maſs, collection, heap, or bundle, of different perceptions, or objects, that fleet away in ſucceſſion, with inconceivable rapidity, perpetually changing, and perpetually in motion. There may be ſome metaphyſicians to whoſe ſouls this diſcription cannot be applied; but I (Mr. HUME) am certain, that this is a true and complete deſcription of my ſoul, and of the ſoul of every other individual of the human race, thoſe few metaphyſicians excepted.

That body has no exiſtence, but as a bundle of perceptions, whoſe exiſtence conſiſts in their being perceived, our author all along maintains. He now affirms, that the ſoul, in like manner, is a bundle of perceptions, and nothing elſe. It follows, then, that there is nothing in the univerſe but impreſſions and ideas; all poſſible perceptions being by our author comprehended in thoſe two claſſes. This philoſophy admits of no other exiſtence whatſoever, not even of a percipient being to perceive theſe perceptions. So that we are now arrived at the height of human wiſdom; at that intellectual eminence, from whence there is a full proſpect of all

that

that we can reaſonably believe to exiſt, and of all that can poſſibly become the object of our knowledge. Alas! what is become of the magnificence of external nature, and the wonders of intellectual energy, the immortal beauties of truth and virtue, and the triumphs of a good conſcience! Where now the warmth of benevolence, the fire of generoſity, the exultations of hope, the tranquil ecſtaſy of devotion, and the pang of ſympathetic delight! All, around, above, and beneath, is one vaſt vacuity, or rather an enormous chaos, encompaſſed with darkneſs univerſally and eternally impenetrable. Body and ſpirit are utterly annihilated; and there remains nothing (for we muſt again deſcend into the gibberiſh of metaphyſic) but a vaſt collection, bundle, maſs, or heap, of unperceived perceptions.

Such, if Mr. HUME's words have any meaning, is the reſult of his ſyſtem. And what is this reſult? If he, or his admirers, can prove, that there is a poſſibility of expreſſing it in words which do not imply a contradiction, I will not call it nonſenſe. If he or they can prove, that it is compatible with any one acknowledged truth in philoſophy, in morals, in religion natural or revealed, I will not call it impious. If he or they can prove, that it does not ariſe

from

from common facts miſrepreſented, and *common words miſunderſtood*, I ſhall admit that it may have ariſen from accurate obſervation, candid and liberal inquiry, perfect knowledge of human nature, and the enlarged views of true philoſophic genius.

SECT. II.

Of the Non-exiſtence of Matter.

IN the preceding ſection I have taken a ſlight ſurvey of the principles, and method of inveſtigation, adopted by the moſt celebrated promoters of modern ſcepticiſm. And it appears that they have not attended to the diſtinction of reaſon and common ſenſe, as explained in the firſt part of this Eſſay, and as acknowledged by mathematicians and natural philoſophers. Erroneous, abſurd, and ſelf-contradictory notions, have been the conſequence. And now, by entering into a more particular detail, we might eaſily ſhew, that many of thoſe abſurdities that diſgrace the philoſophy of human nature, would never have exiſted, if men had acknowledged and attended to this diſtinction; regulating their enquries by the criterion above-mentioned, and never proſecuting any chain of argument beyond the ſelf-evident principles of common ſenſe.

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We ſhall confine ourſelves to two inſtances; one of which is connected with the evidence of external ſenſe, and the other with that of internal.

That matter or body has a real, ſeparate, independent exiſtence *; that there is a real ſun above us, a real air around us, and a real earth under our feet,—has been the belief of all men who were not mad, ever ſince the creation. This is believed, not becauſe it is or can be proved by argument, but becauſe the conſtitution of our nature is ſuch that we muſt believe it. There is here the ſame ground of belief, that there is in the following propoſitions: I exiſt; whatever is, is; two and two make four. It is abſurd, nay, it is impoſſible, to believe the contrary. I could as eaſily believe, that I do not exiſt, that two and two are equal to ten, that whatever is, is not; as that I have neither hands, nor feet, nor head, nor clothes, nor houſe, nor country, nor acquaintance; that the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and ocean, and tempeſt, thunder, and lightning,

* By *independent exiſtence*, we mean an exiſtence that does not depend on us, nor, ſo far as we know, on any being, except the Creator. BERKELEY, and others, ſay, that matter exiſts not but in the minds that perceive it; and conſequently depends, in reſpect of its exiſtence, upon thoſe minds-

ning, mountains, rivers, and cities, have no exiſtence but as ideas or thoughts in my mind, and, independent on me and my faculties, do not exiſt at all, and could not exiſt if I were to be annihilated; that fire, and burning, and pain, which I feel, and the recollection of pain that is paſt, and the idea of pain which I never felt, are all in the ſame ſenſe ideas or perceptions in my mind, and nothing elſe; that the qualities of matter are not qualities of matter, but affections of ſpirit; and that I have no evidence that any being exiſts in nature but myſelf. Philoſophers may ſay what they pleaſe; and the world, who are apt enough to admire what is monſtruous, may give them credit; but I affirm, that it is not in the power, either of wit or of madneſs, to contrive any conceit more inconſiſtent, more abſurd, or more nonſenſical, than this, That the material world has no exiſtence but in my mind.

Des Cartes admits, that every perſon muſt be perſuaded of the exiſtence of a material world: but he does not allow this point to be ſelf-evident, or ſo certain as not to admit of doubt; becauſe, ſays he, we find in experience, that our ſenſes are ſometimes in an error, and becauſe, in dreams we often miſtake ideas for external things really exiſting.

exiſting. He therefore begins his philoſophy of bodies with a formal proof of the exiſtence of body *.

But however imperfect, and however fallacious, we acknowledge our ſenſes to be in other matters, it is certain, that no man ever thought them fallacious in regard to the exiſtence of body; nay, every man of a ſound mind, is, by the law of his nature, convinced, that, in this reſpect at leaſt, they are not, and cannot be miſtaken. Men have ſometimes been deceived by ſophiſtical argument, becauſe the human underſtanding is in ſome, and indeed in many, reſpects fallible; but does it follow, that we cannot, without proof, be certain of any thing, not even of our own exiſtence, nor of the truth of a geometrical axiom? Some diſeaſes are ſo fatal to the mind, as to confound men's notions even of their own identity; but does it follow, that I cannot be certain of my being the ſame perſon to-day I was yeſterday, and twenty years ago, till I have firſt proved this point by argument? And becauſe we are ſometimes deceived by our ſenſes, does it therefore follow, that we never are certain of our not being deceived by them, till we have firſt convinced ourſelves by reaſoning that

* Carteſii Principia, part 1. § 4. part 2. § 1.

that they are not deceitful?—If a Carteſian can prove, that there have been a few perſons of ſound underſtanding, who from a conviction of the deceitfulneſs of their ſenſes, have really diſbelieved, or ſeriouſly doubted, the exiſtence of a material world, I ſhall allow a conviction of this deceitfulneſs to be a ſufficient ground for ſuch doubt or diſbelief, in one or a few inſtances: and if he can prove that ſuch doubt or diſbelief has at any time been general among mankind, I ſhall allow that it may poſſibly be ſo again: —but if it be certain, as I think it is, that no man of a ſound mind, however ſuſpicious of the veracity of his ſenſes, ever did or could really diſbelieve, or ſeriouſly doubt, the exiſtence of a material world, then is this point ſelf-evident, and a principle of common ſenſe, even on the ſuppoſition that our ſenſes are as deceitful as DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE chuſe to repreſent them. But we have formerly proved, that our ſenſes are never ſuppoſed to be deceitful, except when we are conſcious, that our experience is partial, or our obſervation inaccurate; and that even then, the fallacy is detected, and rectified, only by the evidence of ſenſe placed in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation. In regard to the exiſtence of matter, there cannot poſſibly be a ſuſpicion,

that

that our obſervation is inaccurate, or our experience partial; and therefore it is not poſſible, that ever we ſhould diſtruſt our ſenſes in this particular. If it were poſſible, our diſtruſt could never be removed either by reaſoning or by experience.

As to the ſuſpicion againſt the exiſtence of matter that is ſuppoſed to ariſe from our experience of the deluſions of dreaming; we obſerve, in the firſt place, that if this be allowed a ſufficient ground for ſuſpecting, that our waking perceptions are equally deluſive, there is at once an end of all truth, reaſoning, and common ſenſe. That I am at preſent awake, and not aſleep, I certainly know; but I cannot prove it: for there is no criterion for diſtinguiſhing dreaming fancies from waking perceptions, more evident, than that I am now awake, which is the point in queſtion; and, as we have often remarked, it is eſſential to every proof, to be more evident than that which is to be proved. That I am now awake, muſt therefore carry its own evidence along with it; if it be evident at all, it muſt be ſelf-evident. And ſo it is: we may miſtake dreams for realities, but no rational being ever miſtook a reality for a dream. Had we the command of our underſtanding and memory in ſleep, we ſhould probably be ſenſible, that the appearances of

our dreams are all deluſive: which, in fact is ſometimes the caſe; at leaſt I have ſometimes been conſcious, that my dream was a dream; and when it was diſagreeable, have actually made efforts to awake myſelf, which have ſucceeded. But ſleep has a wonderful power over all our faculties. Sometimes we ſeem to have loſt our moral faculty; as when we dream of doing that, without ſcruple or remorſe, which when awake we could not bear to think of. Sometimes memory is extinguiſhed; as when we dream of converſing with our departed friends, without remembering any thing of their death, tho' it was, perhaps, one of the moſt ſtriking incidents we had ever experienced, and is ſeldom or never out of our thoughts when we are awake. Sometimes our underſtanding ſeems to have quite forſaken us; as when we dream of talking with a dead friend, remembering at the ſame time that he is dead, but without being conſcious of any thing abſurd or unuſual in the circumſtance of converſing with a dead man. Conſidering theſe and the other effects of ſleep upon the mind, we need not be ſurpriſed, that it ſhould cauſe us to miſtake our own ideas for real things, and be affected with thoſe in the ſame manner as with theſe. But the moment we awake, and recover

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the uſe of our faculties we are ſenſible, that the dream was a deluſion, and that the objects which now ſolicit our notice are real. To demand a reaſon for the implicit confidence we repoſe in our waking perceptions; or to deſire us to prove, that things are as they appear to our waking ſenſes, and not as they appear to us in ſleep, is as unreaſonable as to demand a reaſon for our belief in our own exiſtence: in both caſes our belief is neceſſary and unavoidable, the reſult of a law of nature, and what we cannot in practice contradict, but to our ſhame and perdition.

If the deluſions of dreaming furniſh any reaſonable pretence for doubting the authenticity of our waking perceptions, they may, with equal reaſon, make me doubtful of my own identity: for I have often dreamed that I was a perſon different from what I am; nay, that I was two or more diſtinct perſons at one and the ſame time.

Further: If DES CARTES thought an argument neceſſary to convince him, that his perception of the external world was not imaginary, but real, I would aſk, how he could know that his argument was real, and not imaginary. How could he know that he was awake, and not aſleep, when he wrote his principles of Philoſophy, if his waking

waking thoughts did not, previous to all reaſoning, carry along with them undeniable evidence of their reality? *I am awake*, is a principle which he muſt have taken for granted, even before he could ſatisfy himſelf of the truth of what he thought the firſt of all principles, *Cogito, ergo ſum.*—To all which we may add, that if there be any perſons in the world who never dream at all *, (and ſome ſuch I think there are), and whoſe belief in the exiſtence of a material world is not a whit ſtronger than that of thoſe whoſe ſleep is always attended with dreaming; this is a proof from experience, that the deluſions of ſleep do not in the leaſt affect our conviction of the authenticity of the perceptions we receive, and of the faculties we exert, when awake.

The firſt part of DES CARTES' argument for the exiſtence of bodies, would prove the reality of the viſionary ideas we perceive in dreams;

* "I once knew a man," ſays Mr. LOCKE, "who was "bred a ſcholar, and had no bad memory, who told me, "that he had never dreamed in his life, till he had that fever "he was then newly recovered of, which was about the five "or ſix and twentieth year of his age. I ſuppoſe the world "affords more ſuch inſtances."

Eſſay on Human Underſtanding, book 2. ch. 1.

A young gentleman of my acquaintance never dreams at all, except when his health is diſordered.

dreams; for they, as well as bodies, preſent themſelves to us, independent on our will. But the principal part of his argument is founded in the veracity of God, which he had before inferred from our conſciouſneſs of the idea of an infinitely perfect, independent, and neceſſarily-exiſtent being. Our ſenſes inform us of the exiſtence of body; they give us this information in conſequence of a law eſtabliſhed by the divine will: but God is no deceiver; therefore is their information true. I have formerly given my opinion of this argument, and ſhown that it is a ſophiſm, as the author ſtates it. We muſt believe our faculties to be true, before we can be convinced, either by proof, or by intuitive evidence. If we refuſe to believe in our faculties, till their veracity be firſt aſcertained by reaſoning, we ſhall never believe in them at all *.

MALEBRANCHE † ſays, that men are more certain of the exiſtence of God, than of the exiſtence of body. He allows, that DES CARTES has proved the exiſtence of body, by the ſtrongeſt arguments that reaſon alone could furniſh; nay, he ſeems to acknowledge thoſe

* See the preceding ſection.

† Recherche de la verité, tom. 3. p. 30. A Paris, chez Pralard, 1679.

thoſe arguments to be unexceptionable *: yet he does not admit, that they amount to a full demonſtration of the exiſtence of matter. In philoſophy, ſays he, we ought to maintain our liberty as long as we can, and to believe nothing but what evidence compels us to believe. To be fully convinced of the exiſtence of bodies, it is neceſſary that we have it demonſtrated to us, not only that there is a God, and that he is no deceiver, but alſo that God hath aſſured us, that he has actually created ſuch bodies; and this, ſays he, I do not find proved in the works of M. DES CARTES.

[There

* Mais quoique M. DES CARTES ait donné les preuves le plus fortes que la raiſon toute ſeule puiſſe fournir pour l'exiſtence des corps; quoiqu' il ſoit evident, que Dieu n'eſt point trompeur, et qu'on puiſſe dire qu'il nous tromperoit effectivement, ſi nous nous trompions nous-mêmes en faiſant l'uſage que nous devons faire de nôtre eſprit, et des autres facultez dont il eſt l'auteur; cependant on peut dire que l'exiſtence de la matiere ne'ſt point encore parfaitement demontrée. Car, enfin, en matiere de philoſophie, nous ne devons croire quoique ce ſoit, *que lorſque l'evidence nous y oblige.* Nous devons faire uſage de nôtre liberté autant que nous le pouvons.—— Pour être pleinement convaincus qu'il a des corps, il faut qu'on nous demontre, non ſeulement qu'il y a un Dieu, et que Dieu n'eſt point trompeur, mais encore que Dieu nous a aſſuré qu'il en a effectivement crée: ce que je ne trouve point prouvé dans les ouvrages de M. DES CARTES.

Tom. 3. *p.* 37, 38, 39.

There are, according to MALEBRANCHE, but two ways in which God ſpeaks to the mind, and compels (or obliges) it to believe; to wit, by evidence, and by the faith. "The faith obliges us to believe that bodies exiſt; but as to the evidence of this truth, it certainly is not complete: and it is alſo certain, that we are not invincibly determined to believe, that any thing exiſts, but God, and our own mind. It is true, that we have an extreme propenſity to believe, that we are ſurrounded with corporeal beings; ſo far I agree with M. DES CARTES: but this propenſity, natural as it is, doth not force our belief by evidence; it only inclines us to believe by impreſſion. Now we ought not to be determined, in our free judgments, by any thing but light and evidence; if we ſuffer ourſelves to be guided by the ſenſible impreſſion, we ſhall be almoſt always miſtaken *."——Our author then

* Dieu ne parle á l'eſprit, et ne l'oblige à croire qu'en deux manieres; par l'evidence, et par la foi. Je demeure d'accord, que *la foi oblige à croire* qu'il y a des corps: mais pour l'evidence, il eſt certain, qu'elle n'eſt point entiere, et que nous ne ſommes point invinciblement portez à croire qu'il y ait quelqu' autre choſe que Dieu et notre eſprit. Il eſt vray, que nous avons un penchant extréme à croire qu'il y a des corps qui nous environnent. Je l'accorde à M. DES CARTES: mais ce penchant,

then propoſes, in brief, the ſubſtance of that argument againſt the exiſtence of body, which BERKELEY afterwards took ſuch pains to illuſtrate; and diſcovers, upon the whole, that, as a point of philoſophy, the exiſtence of matter is but a probability, to which we have it in our power either to aſſent, or not to aſſent, as we pleaſe. In a word, it is by the faith, and not by evidence, that we become certain of this truth.

This is not a proper place for analyſing the paſſage above quoted, otherwiſe it would be eaſy to ſhow, that the doctrine (ſuch as it is) which the author here delivers, is not reconcileable with other parts of his ſyſtem. But I only mean to obſerve, that what is here aſſerted, of our belief in the exiſtence of body being not neceſſary, but ſuch as we may with-hold if we pleaſe, is contrary to my experience. That my body, and this pen and paper, and the other corporeal objects around me, do really exiſt, is to me as evident

chant, tout naturel qu'il eſt, *ne nous y force* point par evidence; il nous y incline ſeulement par impreſſion. Or nous ne devons ſuivre dans nos jugemens libres que la lumiere et l'evidence; et ſi nous nous laiſſons conduire à l'impreſſion ſenſible, nous nous tromperons preſque toujours. *Tom.* 3. *p.* 39.— *La foi* I tranſlate *The faith*, becauſe I ſuppoſe the author to mean the *Chriſtian* or *Catholic faith*. If we take it to denote *faith* or *belief in general*, I know not how we ſhall make any ſenſe of the paſſage.

dent, as that my ſoul exiſts; it is indeed ſo evident, that nothing is or can be more ſo; and though my life depended upon the conſequence, I could not, by any effort, bring myſelf to entertain a doubt of it, even for a ſingle moment.

I muſt therefore affirm, that the exiſtence of matter can no more be diſproved by argument, than the exiſtence of myſelf, or than the truth of a ſelf-evident axiom in geometry. To argue againſt it, is to ſet reaſon in oppoſition to common ſenſe; which is indirectly to ſubvert the foundation of all juſt reaſoning, and to call in queſtion the diſtinction between truth and falſehood. We are told, however, that a great philoſopher has actually demonſtrated, *that matter does not exiſt.* Demonſtrated! truly this is a piece of ſtrange information. At this rate, any falſehood may be proved to be true, and any truth to be falſe. For it is impoſſible, that any truth ſhould be more evident to me than this, *that matter does exiſt.* Let us ſee, however, what BERKELEY has to ſay in behalf of this extraordinary doctrine. It is natural for demonſtration, and for all ſound reaſoning, to produce conviction, or at leaſt ſome degree of aſſent, in the perſon who attends to it, and underſtands it. I read *The Principles of Human Know-*

Knowledge, together with *The Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. The arguments, I confeſs, are ſubtle, and well adapted to the purpoſe of puzzling and confounding. Perhaps I will not undertake to confute them. Perhaps I am buſy, or indolent, or unacquainted with the principles of this philoſophy, or little verſed in your metaphyſical logic. But am I convinced, from this pretended demonſtration, that matter has no exiſtence but as an idea in the mind? Not in the leaſt; my belief now is preciſely the ſame as before.——Is it unphiloſophical, not to be convinced by arguments which I am not able to confute? Perhaps it may, but I cannot help it: you may, if you pleaſe, ſtrike me off the liſt of philoſophers, as a nonconformiſt; you may call me unpliant, unreaſonable, unfaſhionable, and a man with whom it is not worth while to argue: but till the frame of my nature be unhinged, and a new ſet of faculties given me, I cannot believe this ſtrange doctrine, becauſe it is perfectly incredible. But if I were permitted to propoſe one clowniſh queſtion, I would fain aſk, Where is the harm of my continuing in my old opinion, and believing, with the reſt of the world, that I am not the only created being in the univerſe, but that there are many others, whoſe exiſtence

iſtence is as independent on me, as mine is on them? Where is the harm of my believing, that if I were to fall down yonder precipice, and break my neck, I ſhould be no more a man of this world? My neck, Sir, may be an idea to you, but to me it is a reality, and an important one too. Where is the harm of my believing, that if in this ſevere weather, I were to neglect to throw (what you call) the idea of a coat over the ideas of my ſhoulders, the idea of cold would produce the idea of ſuch pain and diſorder as might poſſibly terminate in my real death? What great offence ſhall I commit againſt God or man, church or ſtate, philoſophy or common ſenſe, if I continue to believe, that material food will nouriſh me, though the idea of it will not; that the real ſun will warm and enlighten me, though the livelieſt idea of him will do neither; and that, if I would obtain true peace of mind and ſelf-approbation, I muſt not only form ideas of compaſſion, juſtice, and generoſity, but alſo really exert thoſe virtues in external performance? What harm is there in all this? —O! no harm at all, Sir;—but—the truth,—the truth,—will you ſhut your eyes againſt the truth?—No honeſt man ever will: convince me that your doctrine is true, and I will inſtantly embrace it.—Have I not convinced thee,

thee, thou obſtinate, unaccountable, inexorable——? Anſwer my arguments, if thou canſt.—Alas, Sir, you have given me arguments in abundance, but you have not given me conviction; and if your arguments produce no conviction, they are worth nothing to me. They are like counterfeit bank-bills; ſome of which are ſo dexterouſly forged, that neither your eye nor mine can detect them; yet a thouſand of them would go for nothing at the bank; and even the paper-maker would allow me more handſomely for old rags. You need not give yourſelf the trouble to tell me, that I ought to be convinced: I ought to be convinced only when I feel conviction; when I feel no conviction I ought not to be convinced.——It has been obſerved of ſome doctrines and reaſonings, that their extreme abſurdity prevents their admitting a rational confutation. What! am I to believe ſuch doctrine? am I to be convinced by ſuch reaſoning? Now, I never heard of any doctrine more ſcandalouſly abſurd, than this of the non-exiſtence of matter. There is not a fiction in the *Perſian tales* that I could not as eaſily believe; the ſilleſt conceit of the moſt contemptible ſuperſtition that ever diſgraced human nature, is not more ſhocking to common ſenſe, is not more repugnant

pugnant to every principle of human belief. And muſt I admit this jargon for truth, becauſe I cannot confute the arguments of a man who is a more ſubtle diſputant than I? Does philoſophy require this of me? Then it muſt ſuppoſe, that truth is as variable as the fancies, the characters, and the intellectual abilities of men, and that there is no ſuch thing in nature as common ſenſe.

But all this, I ſhall perhaps be told, is but childiſh cavil, and unphiloſophical declamation. What if, after all, this very doctrine be believed, and the ſophiſtry (as you call it) of BERKELEY be admitted as ſound reaſoning, and legitimate proof? What then becomes of your common ſenſe, and your inſtinctive convictions?—What then, do you aſk? Then indeed I acknowledge the fact to be very extraordinary; and I cannot help being in ſome pain about the conſequences, which muſt be important and fatal. If a man, out of vanity, or from a deſire of being in the faſhion, or in order to paſs for wonderfully wiſe, ſhall ſay, that BERKELEY's doctrine is true, while at the ſame time his belief is preciſely the ſame with mine, it is well; I leave him to enjoy the fruits of his hypocriſy, which will no doubt contribute mightily to his improvement in candour, happineſs, and wiſdom. If a man profeſſing this

this doctrine act like other men in the common affairs of life, I will not believe his profeſſion to be ſincere. For this doctrine, by removing body out of the univerſe, makes a total change in the circumſtances of men; and therefore, if it is not merely verbal, muſt produce a total change in their conduct. When a man is only turned out of his houſe, or ſtripped of his clothes, or robbed of his money, he muſt change his behaviour, and act differently from other men, who enjoy thoſe advantages. Perſuade a man that he is a beggar and a vagabond, and you ſhall inſtantly ſee him change his manners. If your arguments againſt the exiſtence of matter have ever carried conviction along with them, they muſt at the ſame time have produced a much more extraordinary change of conduct; but if they have produced no change of conduct, I inſiſt on it, they have never carried conviction along with them, whatever vehemence of proteſtation men may have uſed in avowing ſuch conviction. If you ſay, that though a man's underſtanding be convinced, there are certain inſtincts in his nature that will not permit him to alter his conduct; or, if he did, the reſt of the world would account him a mad-man; by the firſt apology, you allow the belief of the non-exiſtence of body to be incon-

inconſiſtent with the laws of nature; by the ſecond, to be inconſiſtent with common ſenſe.

But if a man be convinced, that matter has no exiſtence, and believe this ſtrange tenet as ſteadily, and with as little diſtruſt, as I believe the contrary; he will, I am afraid, have but little reaſon to applaud himſelf on this new acquiſition in ſcience; he will ſoon find, it had been better for him to have reaſoned, and believed, and acted, like the reſt of the world. If he fall down a precipice, or be trampled under foot by horſes, it will avail him little, that he once had the honour to be a diſciple of BERKELEY, and to believe that thoſe dangerous objects are nothing but ideas in the mind. And yet, if ſuch a man be ſeen to avoid a precipice, or to get out of the way of a coach and ſix horſes at full ſpeed, he acts as inconſiſtently with his belief, as if he ran away from the picture of an angry man, even while he believed it to be a picture. Suppoſing his life preſerved by the care of friends, or by the ſtrength of natural inſtinct urging him to act contrary to his belief; yet will this belief coſt him dear. For if the plaineſt evidence, and fulleſt conviction, be certainly fallacious, I beg to be informed, what kind of evidence, and what degree

degree of conviction, may reaſonably be depended on. If nature be a juggler by trade, is it for us, poor purblind reptiles, to attempt to penetrate the myſteries of her art, and take upon us to decide, when it is ſhe preſents a true, and when a falſe appearance! I will not ſay, however, that this man runs a greater riſk of univerſal ſcepticiſm, than of univerſal credulity. Either the one or the other, or both, muſt be his portion; and either the one or the other would be ſufficient to imbitter my whole life, and to diſqualify me for every duty of a rational creature. He who can believe againſt common ſenſe, and againſt the cleareſt evidence, and againſt the fulleſt conviction, in any one caſe, may do the ſame in any other; conſequently he may become the dupe of every wrangler who is more acute than he; and then, if he is not entirely ſecluded from mankind, his liberty, and happineſs, are gone for ever. Indeed a chearful temper, ſtrong habits of virtue, and the company of the wiſe and good, may ſtill ſave him from perdition, if he have no temptations nor difficulties to encounter. But it is the end of every uſeful art, to teach us to ſurmount difficulties, not to diſqualify us for attempting them. Men have been known to live many years in a warm chamber, after they were become too deli-

delicate to bear the open air; but who will ſay, that ſuch a habit of body is deſirable? what phyſician will recommend to the healthy ſuch a regimen as would produce it?

But, that I may no longer ſuppoſe, what I maintain to be impoſſible, that mankind in general, or even one rational being, could, by force of argument, be convinced, that this abſurd doctrine is true;—what if all men were in one inſtant deprived of their underſtanding by Almighty power, and made to believe, that matter has no exiſtence but as an idea in the mind, all other earthly things remaining as they are?—Doubtleſs this cataſtrophe would, according to our metaphyſicians, throw a wonderful light on all the parts of knowledge. I pretend not even to gueſs at the number, extent, or quality, of aſtoniſhing diſcoveries that would then ſtart forth into view. But of this I am certain, that, in leſs than a month after, there could not, without another miracle, be one human creature alive on the face of the earth.

BERKELEY foreſaw, and has done what he could to obviate, *ſome* of theſe objections. There are two points which he has taken great pains to prove. The firſt is, That his ſyſtem differs not from the belief of the reſt of mankind; the ſecond, That our conduct

cannot be in the leaſt affected by our diſbelief of the exiſtence of a material world.

1. As to the firſt, it is certainly falſe. Mr. HUME himſelf ſeems willing to give it up. I have known many who could not anſwer BERKELEY's arguments; I never knew one who believed his doctrine. I have mentioned it to ſome who were unacquainted with philoſophy, and therefore could not be ſuppoſed to have any bias in favour of either ſyſtem; they all treated it as moſt contemptible jargon, and what no man in his ſenſes ever did or could believe. I have carefully attended to the effects produced by it upon my own mind; and it appears to me at this moment, as when I firſt heard it, incredible and incomprehenſible. I ſay incomprehenſible: for though, by reading it over and over, I have got a ſet of phraſes and arguments by heart, which would enable me, if I were ſo diſpoſed, to talk, and argue, and write, "about it and about it;" yet, when I lay ſyſtems and ſyllogiſms aſide, when I enter on any part of the buſineſs of life, or when I refer the matter to the unbiaſſed deciſion of my own mind, I plainly ſee, that I had no diſtinct meaning to my words when I ſaid, that the material world has no exiſtence but in the mind that perceives it. In a word, if this author had aſſerted, that I and all mankind

kind acknowledge and believe the *Arabian Nights Entertainment* to be a true hiſtory, I could not have had any better reaſon for contradicting that aſſertion, than I have for contradicting this, "That BERKELEY's prin-"ciples in regard to the exiſtence of matter, "differ not from the belief of the reſt of "mankind."

2. In behalf of the ſecond point he argues, "That nothing gives us an intereſt in the "material world, except the feelings pleaſant "or painful which accompany our percep-"tions; that theſe perceptions are the ſame, "whether we believe the material world to "exiſt or not to exiſt; conſequently, that "our pleaſant or painful feelings are alſo the "ſame; and therefore, that our conduct, "which depends on our feelings and per-"ceptions, muſt be the ſame, whether we "believe or diſbelieve the exiſtence of mat-"ter."

But if it be certain, that by the law of our nature we are unavoidably determined to believe that matter exiſts, and to act upon this belief, (and nothing, I think, is more certain), how can it be imagined, that a contrary belief would produce no alteration in our conduct and ſentiments? Surely the laws of nature are not ſuch trifles, as that it ſhould be a matter of perfect indifference, whether we act and think agreeably to them or not? I be-

lieve that matter exiſts;—I muſt believe that matter exiſts;—I muſt continually act upon this belief; ſuch is the law of my conſtitution. Suppoſe my conſtitution changed in this reſpect, all other things remaining as they are;—would there then be no change in my ſentiments and conduct? If there would not, then is this law of nature, in the firſt place, uſeleſs, becauſe men could do as well without it; ſecondly, inconvenient, becauſe its end is to keep us ignorant of the truth; and, thirdly, abſurd, becauſe inſufficient for anſwering its end, the Biſhop of Cloyne, and others, having, it ſeems, diſcovered the truth in ſpite of it. Is this according to the uſual economy of Nature? Does this language become her ſervants and interpreters? Is it poſſible to deviſe any ſentiments or maxims more ſubverſive of truth, and more repugnant to the ſpirit of true philoſophy?

Further: All external objects have ſome qualities in common; but between an external object and an idea, or thought of the mind, there is not, there cannot poſſibly be, any reſemblance. A grain of ſand, and the globe of the earth; a burning coal, and a lump of ice; a drop of ink, and a ſheet of white paper, reſemble each other, in being extended, ſolid, figured, coloured, and diviſible; but a thought or idea has no extenſion,

ſion, ſolidity, figure, colour, nor diviſibility: ſo that no two external objects can be ſo unlike, as an external object and (what philoſophers call) the idea of it. Now we are taught by BERKELEY, that external objects (that is, the things we take for external objects) are nothing but ideas in our minds; in other words, that they are in every reſpect different from what they appear to be. This candle, it ſeems, hath not one of thoſe qualities it appears to have: it is not white, nor luminous, nor round, nor diviſible, nor extended; for to an idea of the mind, not one of theſe qualities can poſſibly belong. How then ſhall I know what it really is? From what it ſeems to be, I can conclude nothing; no more than a blind man, by handling a bit of black wax, can judge of the colour of ſnow, or the viſible appearance of the ſtarry heavens. The candle may be an Egyptian pyramid, the king of Pruſſia, a mad dog, or nothing at all: it may be the iſland of Madagaſcar, Saturn's ring, or one of the Pleiades, for any thing I know, or can ever know to the contrary, except you allow me to judge of its nature from its appearance; which, however, I cannot reaſonably do, if its appearance and nature are in every reſpect ſo different and unlike as not to have one ſingle quality in common. I muſt therefore believe

believe it to be, what it appears to be, a real, corporeal, external object, and ſo reject BERKELEY's ſyſtem; or I never can, with any ſhadow of reaſon, believe any thing whatſoever concerning it.--Will it yet be ſaid, that the belief of this ſyſtem cannot in the leaſt affect our ſentiments and conduct? With equal truth may it be ſaid, that Newton's conduct and ſentiments would not have been in the leaſt affected by his being metamorphoſed into an ideot, or a pillar of ſalt.

Some readers may perhaps be diſſatisfied with this reaſoning, on account of the ambiguity of the words *external object* and *idea*; which, however, the aſſertors of the non-exiſtence of matter have not as yet fully explained. Others may think that I muſt have miſunderſtood the author; for that he was too acute a logician to leave his ſyſtem expoſed to objections ſo deciſive, and ſo obvious. To gratify ſuch readers, I will not inſiſt on theſe objections. That I may have miſunderſtood the author's doctrine, is not only poſſible, but highly probable; nay, I have reaſon to think, that it was not perfectly underſtood even by himſelf. For did not BERKELEY write his *Principles of human Knowledge*, with this expreſs view, (which does him great honour), to baniſh ſcepticiſm both from ſcience and from religion? Was

he

he not ſanguine in his expectations of ſucceſs? And has not the event proved, that he was egregiouſly miſtaken? For is it not evident, from the uſe to which later authors have applied it, that his ſyſtem leads directly to atheiſm and univerſal ſcepticiſm? And if a machine diſappoint its inventor ſo far as to produce effects contrary to thoſe he wiſhed, intended, and expected; may we not, without breach of charity, conclude, that he did not perfectly underſtand his plan? At any rate, it appears from this fact, that our author did not foreſee all the objections to which his theory is liable. He did not foreſee, that it might be made the foundation of a ſceptical ſyſtem; if he had, we know he would have renounced it with abhorrence.

This one objection therefore, (in which I think I cannot be miſtaken), will fully anſwer my preſent purpoſe: Our author's doctrine is contrary to common belief, and leads to univerſal ſcepticiſm. Suppoſe it, then, univerſally and ſeriouſly adopted; ſuppoſe all men diveſted of all belief, and conſequently of all principle: would not the diſſolution of ſociety, and the deſtruction of mankind neceſſarily enſue?

Still I ſhall be told, that BERKELEY was a good man, and that his principles did him no hurt. I allow it; he was indeed a moſt excellent

excellent perſon; none can revere his memory more than I. But does it appear, that he ever acted according to his principles, or that he thoroughly underſtood them? Does it appear, that, if he had put them in practice, no hurt would have enſued to himſelf*, or to ſociety? Does it appear, that he was a ſceptic, or a friend to ſcepticiſm? Does it appear, that men may adopt his principles without danger of becoming ſceptics? The contrary of all this appears with uncontrovertible evidence.

Surely pride was not made for man. The moſt exalted genius may find in himſelf many affecting memorials of human frailty, and ſuch as often render him an object of compaſſion to thoſe who in virtue and underſtanding

* Let it not be pretended, that a man may diſbelieve his ſenſes without danger of inconvenience. Pyrrho (as we read in Diogenes Laertius) profeſſed to diſbelieve his ſenſes, and to be in no apprehenſion from any of the objects that affected them. The appearance of a precipice or wild beaſt was nothing to Pyrrho; at leaſt he ſaid ſo: he would not avoid them; he knew they were nothing at all, or at leaſt that they were not what they ſeemed to be. Suppoſe him to have been in earneſt; and ſuppoſe his keepers to have in earneſt adopted the ſame principles: would not their limbs and lives have been in as great danger, as the limbs and life of a blind and deaf man wandering by himſelf in a ſolitary place, with his hands tied behind his back? I would as ſoon ſay, that our ſenſes are uſeleſs faculties, as that we might diſbelieve them without danger of inconvenience.

ſtanding are far inferior. I pity BERKELEY's weakneſs in patroniſing an abſurd and dangerous theory; I doubt not but it may have overcaſt many of his days with a gloom, which neither the approbation of his conſcience, nor the natural ſerenity of his temper, could entirely diſſipate. And though I were to believe, that he was intoxicated with this theory, and rejoiced in it; yet ſtill I ſhould pity the intoxication as a weakneſs: for candour will not permit me to give it a harſher name; as I ſee in his other writings, and know by the teſtimony of his contemporaries, particularly Pope and Swift, that he was a friend to virtue, and to human nature.

We muſt not ſuppoſe a falſe doctrine harmleſs, merely becauſe it has not been able to corrupt the heart of a good man. Nor, becauſe a few ſceptics have not authority to render ſcience contemptible, nor power to overturn ſociety, muſt we ſuppoſe, that therefore ſcepticiſm is not dangerous to ſcience or mankind. The effects of a general ſcepticiſm would be dreadful and fatal. We muſt therefore, notwithſtanding our reverence for the character of BERKELEY, be permitted to affirm, what we have ſufficiently proved, that his doctrine is ſubverſive of man's moſt important intereſts, as a moral, intelligent, and percipient being.

After

After all, though I were to grant, that the diſbelief of the exiſtence of matter could not produce any conſiderable change in our principles of action and reaſoning, the reader will find in the ſequel *, that the point I have chiefly in view would not be much affected even by that conceſſion. I ſay not this, as being diffident or ſceptical in regard to what I have advanced on the preſent ſubject. Doctrines which I do not believe, I will never recommend to others. I am abſolutely certain, that to me the belief of BERKELEY's ſyſtem would be attended with the moſt fatal conſequences; and that it would be equally dangerous to the reſt of mankind, I cannot doubt, ſo long as I believe their nature and mine to be the ſame.

Though it be abſurd to attempt a proof of what is ſelf-evident, it is manly and meritorious to confute the objections that ſophiſtry may urge againſt it. This, with reſpect to the ſubject in queſtion, has been done, in a deciſive and maſterly manner, by the learned and ſagacious Dr. Reid †; who proves, that the reaſonings of BERKELEY, and others, concerning primary and ſecondary qualities ‡, owe all their ſtrength to the ambiguity of

* Part 2. chap. 3.

† Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Senſe.

‡ DES CARTES, LOCKE, and BERKELEY, ſuppoſe, that what we call *a body* is nothing but a collection of qualities; and

of words. I have proved, that, though this fundamental error had never been detected, the philoſophy of BERKELEY is in its own nature abſurd, becauſe it ſuppoſes the original principles of common ſenſe controvertible and fallacious: a ſuppoſition repugnant to the genius of true philoſophy; and which leads to univerſal credulity, or univerſal ſcepticiſm; and, conſequently, to the ſubverſion of knowledge and virtue, and the extermination of the human ſpecies.

It is proper, before we proceed to the next inſtance, to make a remark or two on what has been ſaid.

1. Here we have an inſtance of a doctrine advanced by ſome philoſophers, in direct contradiction

theſe they divide into *primary* and *ſecondary*. Of the former kind are magnitude, extenſion, ſolidity, &c. which LOCKE and the CARTESIANS allow to belong to bodies at all times, whether perceived or not. Of the latter kind are the *heat* of fire, the *ſmell* and *taſte* of a roſe, &c. and theſe, by the ſame authors, and by BERKELEY, are ſaid to exiſt not in the bodies themſelves, but only in the mind that perceives them: an error they are led into by ſuppoſing, that the words *heat*, *taſte*, *ſmell*, &c. ſignify nothing but *a perception*; whereas we have formerly ſhown, that they alſo ſignify *an external thing*. BERKELEY, following the hints which he found in DES CARTES, MALEBRANCHE and LOCKE, has applied the ſame mode of reaſoning to prove, that primary, as well as ſecondary qualities, have no external exiſtence; and conſequently, that body (which conſiſts of theſe two claſſes of qualities, and nothing elſe) exiſts only as an idea in the mind that perceives it, and exiſts no longer than while it is perceived.

tradiction to the general belief of all men in all ages.

2. The reaſoning by which it is ſupported, though long accounted unanſwerable, did never produce a ſerious and ſteady conviction. Common ſenſe ſtill declared the doctrine to be falſe; we were ſorry to find the powers of human reaſon ſo limited, as not to afford a logical confutation of it; we were convinced it merited confutation, and flattered ourſelves, that one time or other it would be confuted.

3. The real and general belief of this doctrine would be attended with fatal conſequences to ſcience, and to humane nature: for this is a doctrine according to which a man could not act nor reaſon in the common affairs of life, without incurring the charge of inſanity or folly, and involving himſelf in diſtreſs and perdition.

4. An ingenious man, from a ſenſe of the bad tendency of this doctrine, applies himſelf to examine the principles on which it is founded; diſcovers them to be erroneous; and proves, to the full conviction of all competent judges, that from beginning to end it is all a myſtery of falſhood, ariſing from the uſe of ambiguous expreſſions, and from the gratuitous admiſſion of principles which never could have been admitted if they had been thoroughly underſtood.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Of Liberty and Neceſſity.

THE ſecond inſtance to which I purpoſe to apply the principles of this diſcourſe, by ſhowing the danger of carrying any inveſtigation beyond the dictates of common ſenſe, is no other than the celebrated queſtion concerning liberty and neceſſity; a queſtion on which many things have been ſaid, and ſome things, I preſume, to little purpoſe. To enter into all the particulars of this controverſy, is foreign to my preſent deſign; and I would not wiſh to add to a diſpute already too bulky. My intention is, to treat the doctrine of neceſſity as I treated that of the non-exiſtence of matter; by enquiring, whether the one be not, as well as the other, contrary to common ſenſe, and therefore abſurd.

1. That certain intentions and actions are in themſelves, and previous to all conſideration of their conſequences, good, laudable, and meritorious; and that other actions and inten-

intentions are bad, blameable, and worthy of puniſhment,—has been felt and acknowledged by all reaſonable creatures in all ages and nations. We need not wonder at the univerſality of this ſentiment: it is as natural to the human conſtitution, as the faculties of hearing, ſeeing, and memory; it is as clear, unequivocal, and affecting, as any intimation from any ſenſe external or internal.

2. That we cannot do ſome things, but have it in our power to do others, is what no man in his ſenſes will heſitate to affirm. I can take up my ſtaff from the ground, but I cannot lift a ſtone of a thouſand weight. On a common, I may walk ſouthward or northward, eaſtward or weſtward; but I cannot aſcend to the clouds, nor ſink downward to the centre of the earth. Juſt now I have power to think of an abſent friend, of the Peak of Teneriffe, of a paſſage in Homer, or of the death of Charles I. When a man asks me a queſtion, I have it in my power to anſwer or be ſilent, to anſwer ſoftly or roughly, in terms of reſpect or in terms of contempt. Frequent temptations to vice fall in my way; I may yield, or I may reſiſt: if I reſiſt, I applaud myſelf, becauſe I am conſcious it was in my power to do otherwiſe; if I yield, I am filled with ſhame and remorſe, for

for having neglected to do what I might have done, and ought to have done. My liberty in these instances I cannot prove by argument; but there is not a truth in geometry of which I am more certain.

Is not this doctrine sufficiently obvious? Must I quote Epictetus, or any other ancient author, to prove that men were of the same opinion in former times? No idea occurs more frequently in my reading and conversation, than that of *power* or *agency*; and I think I understand my own meaning as well when I speak of it, as when I speak of any thing else. But this idea has had the misfortune to come under the examination of Mr. HUME, who, according to custom, has found means so to darken and disfigure it, that, till we have cleared it of his misrepresentations, we cannot proceed any further in the present subject. And we are the more inclined to digress on this occasion, that he has made his theory of power the ground of some atheistical inferences, which we should not scruple at any time to step out of our way to overturn.—Perhaps these frequent digressions are offensive to the reader: they are equally so to the writer. To remove rubbish is neither an elegant nor a pleasant work, but it is often necessary. It is peculiarly necessary in the philosophy of human nature.

The

The road to moral truth has been left in ſuch a plight by ſome modern projectors, that a man of honeſty and plain ſenſe muſt either, with great labour, and loſs of time, delve his way through, or be ſwallowed up in a quagmire. The metaphyſician advances more eaſily. His levity, perhaps, enables him, like Camilla in Virgil, to skim along the ſurface without ſinking; or perhaps, the extreme ſubtlety of his genius can, like Satan in Paradiſe Loſt, penetrate this chaos, without being much incumbered or retarded in his progreſs. But men of ordinary talents have not thoſe advantages, and muſt therefore be allowed to flounce along, though with no very graceful motion, the beſt way they can.

All ideas, according to Mr. HUME's fundamental hypotheſis, are copied from and repreſent impreſſions: But we have never any impreſſion that contains any power or efficacy: We never, therefore, have any idea of power*. In proof of the minor propoſition of this ſyllogiſm, he remarks, That "when we think we perceive our mind "acting on matter, or one piece of matter "acting upon another, we do in fact per- "ceive only two objects or events conti- "guous and ſucceſſive, the ſecond of which "is

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 282.

" is always found in experience to follow " the firſt; but that we never perceive, ei- " ther by external ſenſe, or by conſciouſneſs, " that power, energy, or efficacy, which " connects the one event with the other. By " obſerving that the two events do always " accompany each other, the imagination " acquires a habit of going readily from " the firſt to the ſecond; and from the ſe- " cond to the firſt; and hence we are led " to conceive a kind of neceſſary connexion " between them. But in fact there is nei- " ther neceſſity nor power in the objects " we conſider, but only in the mind that " conſiders them; and even in the mind, " this power of neceſſity is nothing but a " determination of the fancy, acquired by " habit, to paſs from the idea of an object to " that of its uſual attendant *."——So that what we call the efficacy of a cauſe to produce an effect, is neither in the cauſe nor in the effect, but only in the imagination, which has contracted a habit of paſſing from the object called the cauſe, to the object called the effect, and thus aſſociating them together. Has the fire a power to melt lead? No; but the fancy is determined by habit to paſs from the idea of fire to that

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 272—300.

of melted lead, on account of our having always perceived them contiguous and ſucceſſive—and this is the whole matter. Have I a power to move my arm? No; the volition that precedes the motion of my arm has no connexion with that motion; but the motion having been always obſerved to follow the volition, comes to be aſſociated with it in the fancy; and what we call the power, or neceſſary connexion, has nothing to do, either with the volition or with the motion, but is merely a determination of my fancy, or your fancy, or any body's fancy, to aſſociate the idea or impreſſion of my volition with the impreſſion or idea of the motion of my arm.—I am ſorry I cannot expreſs myſelf more clearly; but I ſhould not do juſtice to my author, if I did not imitate his obſcurity on the preſent occaſion: plain words will never do, when one has an unintelligible doctrine to ſupport.

What ſhall we ſay to this collection of ſtrange phraſes? or what name ſhall we give it? Shall we call it a moſt ingenious diſcovery, illuſtrated by a moſt ingenious argument? This would be complimenting the author at a very great expence; for this would imply, not only that Mr. Hume is the wiſeſt of mortal men, but alſo that he is the only individual of that ſpecies of animals

mals who is not a fool. Certain it is, that all men have in all ages talked, and argued, and acted, from a perſuaſion that they had a very diſtinct notion of power. If our author can prove, that they had no ſuch notion, he can alſo prove, that all human diſcourſe is nonſenſe, all human actions abſurdity, and all human compoſitions (his own not excepted) words without meaning. The boldneſs of this theory will, however, paſs with many, for a proof of its being ingenious. Be it ſo, Gentlemen, I diſpute not about epithets; if you will have it, that genius conſiſteth in the art of putting words together ſo as to form abſurd propoſitions, I have nothing more to ſay. Others will admire this doctrine, becauſe the words by which the author means to illuſtrate and prove it, if printed on a good paper and with an elegant type, would of themſelves make a pretty ſizeable volume. It were pity to deprive theſe people of the pleaſure of admiring; otherwiſe I might tell them, that nothing is more eaſy than this method of compoſition; for that I would undertake, at a very ſhort warning, (if it could be done innocently, and without prejudice to my health), to write as many pages, with equal appearance of reaſon and argument, and with equal advantage to philoſophy and mankind, in vindication of any

given abſurdity; provided only, that (like the abſurdity in queſtion) it were expreſſed in words of which one at leaſt is ambiguous.

In truth, I am ſo little diſpoſed to admire this extraordinary paradox, that nothing could make me believe its author to have been in earneſt, if I had not found him drawing inferences from it too ſerious to be jeſted with by any perſon who is not abſolutely diſtracted. It is one of Mr. HUME's maxims, That we can never have reaſon to believe, that any object, or quality of an object, exiſts, of which we cannot form an idea *. But, according to this aſtoniſhing theory of power, and cauſation, we can form *no idea* of power, nor of any being endowed with any power, MUCH LESS of one endowed with infinite power †. The inference is——what I do not chuſe to commit to paper. But our elegant author is not ſo ſuperſtitious. He often puts his readers in mind, that this inference, or ſomething very like it, is deducible from his doctrine ‡:——for which, no doubt, every friend to truth, virtue, and human nature, is infinitely obliged to him!

But

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 302.

† Some readers will ſmile, perhaps, at the phraſeology of this ſentence; but I quote the author's own words. See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 432.

‡ Ibid. p. 284, 291, 306, 431. &c.

But what do you ſay in oppoſition to my theory? You affect to treat it with a contempt which hardly becomes you, and which my philoſophy has not met with from your betters! pray let us hear your arguments.—And do you, Sir, really think it incumbent on me to prove by argument, that I, and all other men, have a notion of power; and that the efficacy of a cauſe (of fire, for inſtance, to melt lead) is in the cauſe, and not in my mind? Would you think it incumbent on me to confute you with arguments, if you were pleaſed to affirm, that all men have tails and cloven feet; and that it was I who produced the earthquake that deſtroyed Liſbon, the plague that depopulates Conſtantinople, the heat that ſcorches the wilds of Africa, and the cold that freezes the Hyperborean ocean? Truly, Sir, I have not the face to undertake a direct confutation of what I do not underſtand; and I am ſo far from comprehending this part of your ſyſtem, that I will venture to pronounce it perfectly unintelligible. I know there are ſome who ſay they underſtand it; but I alſo know, that there are ſome who ſpeak, and read, and write too, with very little expence of thought.

Theſe are all but evaſions, you exclaim; and inſiſt on my coming to the point. Never fear, Sir; I am too deeply intereſted in ſome

of

of the conſequences of this theory of yours, to put you off with evaſions. To come therefore to the point, I ſhall firſt ſtate your doctrine in your own words, that there may be no riſk of miſrepreſentation; and then if I ſhould not be able *directly* to prove it falſe, (for the reaſon already given), I ſhall demonſtrate, *indirectly* at leaſt, or by the apagogical method, that it is not, and cannot poſſibly be true.

"As the neceſſity," ſays Mr. HUME, "which makes two times two equal to "four, or three angles of a triangle equal "to two right ones, lies only in the act "of the underſtanding, by which we con"ſider and compare theſe ideas*; in like "manner, the neceſſity or power which "unites cauſes and effects, lies in the deter"mination of the mind to paſs from the one "to the other. The efficacy, or energy, of "cauſes, is neither placed in the cauſes "themſelves, nor in the Deity, nor in the "concurrence of theſe two principles; but "belongs entirely to the ſoul, which con"ſiders the union of two or more objects in "all paſt inſtances. It is here that the real "power

* What! is it my underſtanding that makes two and two equal to four! Was it not ſo before I was born, and would it not be ſo though all intelligence were to ceaſe throughout the univerſe!—But it is idle to ſpend time in confuting what every child who has learned the very firſt elements of ſcience, knows to be abſurd.

" power of cauſes is placed along with their " connexion and neceſſity *."

To find that his principles lead to atheiſm, would ſtagger an ordinary philoſopher, and make him ſuſpect his fundamental hypotheſis, and all his ſubſequent reaſonings. But the author now quoted is not ſtaggered by conſiderations of this kind. On the contrary, he is ſo intoxicated with his diſcovery, that, however ſceptical in other points, he ſeems willing to admit this as one certain concluſion †.

If a man can reconcile himſelf to atheiſm, which is the greateſt of all abſurdities, I fear, I ſhall

* Treatiſe of human Nature, vol. 1. p. 291.

† Speaking of it in another place, he ſays, " A concluſion " which is ſomewhat extraordinary, but which ſeems founded " on ſufficient evidence. Nor will its evidence be weakened " by any general diffidence of the underſtanding, or ſceptical " ſuſpicion, concerning every concluſion which is new and ex- " traordinary. No concluſions can be more agreeable to ſcep- " ticiſm than ſuch as make diſcoveries concerning the weak- " neſs and narrow limits of human reaſon and capacity."

Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 87. *edit.* 1767.

I know not what diſcoveries this concluſion may lead others to make concerning our author's reaſon and capacity: but I have ſome ground to think, that in him it has not wrought any extraordinary ſelf-abaſement; otherwiſe he would not have aſſerted, with ſo much confidence, what he acknowledges to be a *moſt violent paradox*, and what is indeed contrary to the experience and conviction of every perſon of common ſenſe. See *Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 291, 299.

I ſhall hardly put him out of conceit with his doctrine, when I ſhow him that other leſs enormous abſurdities are implied in it. We may make the trial however. Gentlemen are ſometimes pleaſed to entertain unaccountable prejudices againſt their Maker; who yet, in other matters, where neither faſhion nor hypotheſis interfere, condeſcend to acknowledge, that the good old diſtinction between truth and falſehood is not altogether without foundation.

On the ſuppoſition that we have no idea of power or energy, and that the preceding theory of cauſation is juſt, our author gives the following definition of a cauſe; which ſeems to be fairly enough deduced from his theory, and which he ſays is the beſt that he can give. "A cauſe is an object precedent "and contiguous to another, and ſo united "with it, that the idea of the one determines "the mind to form the idea of the other, and "the impreſſion of the one to form a more "lively idea of the other *." There are now in my view two contiguous houſes, one of which was built laſt ſummer, and the other two years ago. By ſeeing them conſtantly together for ſeveral months, I find, that the idea of the one determines my mind to

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 298.

to form the idea of the other, and the impreſſion of the one to form a more lively idea of the other. So that, according to our author's definition, the one houſe is the cauſe, and the other the effect!---Again, day and night have always been contiguous and ſucceſſive; the imagination naturally runs from the idea or impreſſion of the one to the idea of the other: conſequently, according to the ſame profound theory and definition, either day is the cauſe of night, or night the cauſe of day, juſt as we conſider the one or the other to have been originally prior in time: that is, in other words, light is either the cauſe or the effect of darkneſs; and its being the one or the other depends entirely on my imagination! Let thoſe admire this diſcovery who underſtand it.

Cauſation * implies more than priority and contiguity of the cauſe to the effect. This relation cannot be conceived at all, without a ſuppoſition of power or energy in the cauſe † Let the reader recollect two things that ſtand related as cauſe and effect; let him

* *Cauſation*, in Mr. HUME'ſtyle, denotes *the relation of cauſe and effect*. In Engliſh authors, the word rarely occurs, and never, I think, in this ſenſe. It properly ſignifies, *The act or power of cauſing*.

† Non ſic cauſa intelligi debet, ut quod cuique antecedat id ei cauſa ſit, ſed quod cuique *efficienter* antecedat.

Cicero De Fato, cap. 15.

him contemplate them with a view to this relation; then let him conceive the cauſe diveſted of all power; and he muſt at the ſame inſtant conceive, that it is a cauſe no longer: for a cauſe diveſted of power, is diveſted of that by which it is a cauſe. If a man, after examining his notion of cauſation in this manner, is conſcious that he has an idea of power, then I ſay he has that idea. If all men, in all ages, have uſed the word *power*, or ſomething ſynonymous to it, and if all men know what they mean when they ſpeak of power, I maintain, that all men have a notion, conception, or idea of power, in whatever way they came by it: and I alſo maintain, that no true philoſopher ever denied the exiſtence or reality of any thing, merely becauſe he could not give an account of its origin, or becauſe the opinion commonly received concerning its origin did not happen to quadrate with his ſyſtem.

When, therefore, Mr. HUME ſays, that the efficacy or energy of cauſes is not placed in the cauſes themſelves, he ſays neither leſs nor more than this, that what is eſſential to a cauſe is not in a cauſe; or, in other words,---that a cauſe is not a cauſe.----Are there any perſons who, upon the authority of this theoriſt, have raſhly adopted atheiſtical principles? I know there are ſuch. Ye blinded followers

followers of a blind guide, ye dupes of unmeaning words and incomprehenſible arguments, behold on what a champion ye have placed your confidence! All the comfort I can give you is, that if it be poſſible for the ſame thing at the ſame time to be and not to be, you may poſſibly be in the right.

It follows from what has been ſaid, that we cannot admit this theory of power and cauſation, without admitting, at the ſame time, the groſſeſt and moſt impious abſurdities. Is this a ſufficient confutation of it? I think it is. If any perſon think otherwiſe, I take a ſhorter method, and utterly deny all the premiſes from which this ſtrange concluſion is ſuppoſed to reſult. I deny the doctrine of impreſſions and ideas, as the author has explained it; nay, I have already affirmed, and proved, it to be not only falſe, but unintelligible. And I maintain, that though it could be ſhown, that all ſimple ideas are derived from impreſſions, or intimations of ſenſe, it is true, notwithſtanding, that all men have an idea of power. They get it by experience, that is, by intimations of ſenſe, both external and internal. Their mind acting upon their body gives them this notion or idea; their body acting on other bodies, and acted on by other bodies, gives them the ſame idea; which is alſo

ſug-

ſuggeſted by all the effects and changes they ſee produced in the univerſe. So thoroughly are we acquainted with it, that we can, in caſes innumerable, determine, with the utmoſt accuracy and certainty, the degree of power neceſſary to produce a given effect.

I repeat therefore, notwithſtanding all our author has ſaid, or can ſay, to the contrary, that ſome things are in our power, and others are not; and that we perfectly underſtand our own meaning when we ſay ſo.---That the reader may not loſe any chain in our reaſoning, he will pleaſe to look back to the ſecond and third paragraphs of this ſection.

3. By attending to my own internal feelings, and to the evidence given by other men of theirs, I am ſenſible, that I deſerve reward or puniſhment for thoſe actions only which are in my own power. I am no more accountable for the evil which I can neither prevent nor remedy, than for the deſtruction of Troy, or the plagues of Egypt; and for the good which happens by my means, but againſt my will, I no more deſerve reward or praiſe, than if I were a piece of inanimate matter.

This is the doctrine of common ſenſe; and this doctrine has in all ages been ſupported by ſome of the moſt powerful principles of our nature; by principles which, in

in the common affairs of life, no man dares ſuppoſe to be equivocal or fallacious. A man may as well tell me that I am blind, or deaf, or that I feel no heat when I approach the fire, as that I have not a natural ſentiment diſpoſing me to blame intentional injury, and to praiſe intentional beneficence; and which makes me feel and be conſcious, that the evil I am compelled to do is not criminal, and that the good I perform againſt my will is not meritorious. That other men are conſcious of the ſame ſentiment, I know with as much certainty as I can know any thing of what paſſes in the minds of other men; for I have daily and hourly opportunities of making obſervations in regard to this very point. The greateſt part of converſation turns upon the morality of human actions; and I never yet heard any perſon ſeriouſly blamed or applauded, by a reaſonable creature, for an action in the performance of which he was not conſidered as a free agent*. The moſt rigid

* Si omnia fato fiunt, omnia fiunt cauſa antecedente; et, ſi appetitus, illa etiam quæ appetitum ſequuntur: ergo, etiam aſſenſiones. At ſi cauſa appetitus non eſt ſita in nobis, ne ipſe quidem appetitus eſt in noſtra proteſtate. Quod ſi ita eſt, ne illa quidem quæ appetitu efficiuntur ſunt ſita in nobis. Non ſunt igitur, neque aſſenſiones neque actiones, in noſtra poteſtate: *ex quo efficitur, ut nec laudationes juſtæ ſint, nec vituperationes, nec honores, nec ſupplicia.* Quod cum vitioſum ſit, probabiliter

rigid Predeſtinarians ſuppoſe freedom of will to be in one way or other conſiſtent with eternal and unconditional decrees: if they cannot explain in what way,—they call it a myſtery; it ſurpaſſes their underſtanding;—but it muſt be ſo; for otherwiſe the morality of actions is altogether inconceivable †. Do

babiliter concludi putant, non omnia fato fieri quæcumque fiant.

Cicero, De Fato, cap. 17.

† The reader, I hope, does not think me ſuch a novice in reaſoning, as to urge the judgment of the council of Trent in behalf of any doctrine, philoſophical or religious. Yet every fact in logic and morals is worth our notice, If we would eſtabliſh thoſe ſciences on their only firm foundation, the univerſal conſent and practice of mankind. It deſerves, therefore, to be remarked, that, at the Reformation, this conſciouſneſs of free will was acknowledged, both by the Lutherans, and by the church of Rome, to be a principle of common ſenſe, which was to be aſcertained, not by reaſoning, but by experimental proof. So ſays a moſt judicious and elegant hiſtorian, whoſe words are remarkably appoſite to the preſent ſubject, and to the manner in which we treat it. Speaking of ſome articles ſaid to be maintained by the Lutherans, in oppoſition to free-will, the hiſtorian informs us, that, in the judgment of many of that celebrated council, the opinion implied in theſe articles, " E empia, e biasfema contra Dio.—Ch' era una pazzia *contra il* " *ſenſo comune, eſperimentando ogni huomo la propria li-* " *bertà, che non merita conteſtatione, ma, comme Ariſtotele dice,* " *o caſtigo, o prova eſperimentale.* Che i medeſimi diſcepoli " di Luthero s'erano accorti della piazzia; e, moderando l'aſ- " ſordità, diſſero poi, eſſervi libertà nell' huomo in quello, che " tocca le attioni eſterne politiche ed economiche, e quanto ad " ogni giuſtitia civile; *le quali è ſciocco chi non conoſce venir*

" *dal*

Do the intereſts of ſcience, or of virtue, ſuffer by this repreſentation of the matter? I think not.

But ſome philoſophers, not ſatisfied with this view of it, are for bringing the ſentiment of moral liberty to the teſt of reaſon. They want to prove by argument, either that I have, or that I have not, ſuch a feeling: or, if I ſhall be found to have it, they want to know whether it be fallacious or not. In other words, they want to prove, or to diſprove, what I know by inſtinct to to be unqueſtionably certain: or they want to inquire, whether it be reaſonable for me to act and think according to a principle, which, by the law of my nature, I cannot contradict, either in thought or action. Would not the ſame ſpirit of inquiry lead a geometrician to attempt a proof or confutation of his axioms; a natural philoſopher to doubt whether things be what his ſenſes repreſent them; an ordinary man to argue concerning the propriety of perceiving colours by the eyes, and odours by the noſtrils? Would not the ſame ſpirit of doubt and diſputation, applied to more familiar inſtances, transform a philoſopher into a madman,

"*dal conſeglio ed ellettione*; reſtringendoſi a negar la liber-
"tà quanta alla ſola giuſtitia divina." *Iſtoria del Concilio Trid. di P. Sarpi. lib. 2.*

man, and a perſon of plain ſenſe into an idiot?

But let us not be too rigid. If a philoſopher muſt needs have his rattles and play-things, let him have them: only, for his own ſake, and for the ſake of the neighbours, I would adviſe, that edge-tools, and other dangerous inſtruments of amuſement, be kept out of his reach. If a Carteſian will not, on any account, believe his own exiſtence, except I grant him his *Cogito, ergo ſum*, far be it from me to deprive the poor man of that conſolation. The reaſoning indeed is bad, but the principle is good; and a good principle is ſo good a thing, that rather than oblige a man to renounce it, I would diſpenſe with the ſtrict obſervance of a logical precept. If a ſtar-gazer cannot ſee the inhabitants of the moon with one perſpective, let him tie a ſcore of them together, with all my heart. If a virtuoſo is inclined to look at the ſun through a microſcope, and at rotten cheeſe through a teleſcope, to apply ear-trumpets to his eyes, and equip his two ears with as many pairs of ſpectacles, he has my full permiſſion; and much good may it do him. Theſe amuſements are idle, but they are innocent. The Carteſian, if the truth were known, would be found

found neither the better nor the worſe for his enthymeme. The ſtar-gazer has not atchieved a ſingle glimpſe of his lunar friends, but ſees more confuſedly than before: however, he may conſole himſelf with this reflection, that one may paſs through life with the character of a very honeſt and tolerably happy man, though he ſhould never have it in his power to extend the ſphere of his acquaintance beyond this ſublunary globe. The virtuoſo takes a wrong, and indeed a very prepoſterous method, for improving his ſight and hearing; but if he is careful to confine theſe frolics to his private apartment, and never boaſt in public of his auditory, or optical apparatus, he may live comfortably and reſpectably enough, though he ſhould never ſee the ſpots in the ſun, nor the briſtles on a mite's back.

I would, however, earneſtly exhort my friend the metaphyſician, to believe himſelf a free agent upon the bare authority of his feelings, and not to imagine that Nature is ſuch a bungler in her trade, as firſt to intend to impoſe upon him, and then inadvertently give him ſagacity to ſee through the impoſture. Indeed, if it were a matter of indifference, whether we believe our moral feelings or diſbelieve them, I ſhould not object to the uſe of a little unbelief now and

then, by way of experiment or cordial, provided it were a thing that a reaſonable man could take any pleaſure in. But I am convinced, that habitual dram-drinking is not more pernicious to our animal nature, then habitual ſcepticiſm to our rational. And when once this ſcepticiſm comes to affect our moral ſentiments, or active principles, all is over with us: we are in the condition of a man intoxicated; fit only for raving, dozing, and doing miſchief.

But, alas! the metaphyſician is too headſtrong to follow my advice. It would be a fine thing, indeed, ſays he, if gentlemen were to yield to the dictates of nature. Is there a ſingle dictate of nature to which people of faſhion now-a-days pay any regard? No, no; the world is grown wiſer. As to this ſentiment of moral liberty, I very much queſtion its title to be ranked with the dictates of nature. It ſeems to be a piece of vile ſophiſtication, a paltry prejudice, hatched by the nurſe, and foſtered by the prieſt. I am determined to take it roundly to taſk, and examine its pretenſions with the eye of a philoſopher and freethinker.—— Very well, Sir, you may take your own way; it requires no ſkill in magic to be able to foretell the conſequence. A traveller no ſooner quits the right road, on ſuppoſition of

its

its being wrong, than he gets into one that is really ſo. If you ſet out in your inquiry, with ſuſpecting the principles of common ſenſe to be erroneous, you have little chance of falling in with any other principles that are not erroneous.

The reſult of the metaphyſical inquiry is as follows: "Every human action muſt "proceed from ſome motive as its cauſe. "The motive or cauſe muſt be ſufficient to "produce the action or effect; otherwiſe it "is no motive: and, if ſufficient to pro- "duce it, muſt neceſſarily produce it; for "every effect proceeds neceſſarily from its "cauſe, as heat neceſſarily proceeds from "fire. Now, the immediate cauſes of ac- "tion are volitions, or energies of the will: "theſe ariſe neceſſarily from paſſions or ap- "petites, which proceed neceſſarily from "judgments or opinions; which are the "neceſſary effect of external things, or of "ideas, operating, according to the neceſ- "ſary laws of nature, upon our ſenſes, in- "tellect, or fancy: and theſe ideas, or things, "preſent themſelves to our powers of per- "ception, as neceſſarily as light preſents it- "ſelf when we turn our open eyes to the "ſun. In a word, every human action is "the effect of a ſeries of cauſes, each of "which does neceſſarily produce its own

" proper effect: ſo that if the firſt operate, " all the reſt muſt follow. It is confeſſed, " that an action may proceed immediately " from volition, and may therefore properly " be called voluntary: but the *primum mobile* " or firſt cauſe, even of a voluntary action, is " ſomething as independent on our will, as " the production of the great-grandfather is " independent on the grandſon. Between " phyſical and moral neceſſity there is no dif- " ference; the phenomena of the moral " world being no leſs neceſſary than thoſe of " the material. And, to conclude, if we are " conſcious of a feeling or ſentiment of mo- " ral liberty, it muſt be a deceitful one; " for no paſt action of our lives could have " been prevented, and no future action can " poſſibly be contingent. Therefore man is " not a free, but a neceſſary agent."

This is juſt ſuch a concluſion as I ſhould have expected; for thus it always has been, and will be, when the dictates of common ſenſe are queſtoned and diſputed. The exiſtence of body, the exiſtence of the ſoul, the reality of our idea of power, the difference between moral and intellectual virtue, the certainty of the inference from an effect to the cauſe, and many other ſuch truths, dictates of common ſenſe, have been called in queſtion, and argued upon. And what is the

reſult? Why truly it has been found, that there is no body, that there is no ſoul, that we have no idea of power, that moral and intellectual virtue are not different, and that a cauſe is not neceſſary to the production of that which hath a beginning. And now the liberty of human actions is queſtioned and debated, what could we expect, but that it would ſhare the ſame fate! But paſſing this for the preſent *, which, however, ſeems to merit attention, we ſhall here only enquire, whether this doctrine of neceſſity be not in ſome important points extremely ſimilar to that of the non-exiſtence of matter.

1. Of this doctrine we obſerve, in the firſt place, that, if any regard is to be had to the meaning of words, and if human actions may reaſonably be taken for the ſigns of human ſentiments, all mankind have, in all ages, been of a different opinion. The number of profeſſed philoſophers who have maintained that all things happen through unavoidable neceſſity, is but ſmall; nor are we to imagine that

* Some readers may poſſibly, on this occaſion, call to mind a ſaying of an old Greek author, who, though now obſolete, was in his day, and for ſeveral ages after, accounted a man of conſiderable penetration. I neither mention his name, nor tranſlate his words, for fear of offending (pardon a fond author's vanity) *my polite readers*. ΑΝΘ ΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΓΑΠΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ΟΥΚ ΕΔΕΞΑΝΤΟ---ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΠΕΜΨΕΙ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΝ ΠΛΑΝΗΣ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΠΙΣΤΕΥΣΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΤΩ ΨΕΥΔΕΙ.

that all the ancient Fataliſts were of this number. The Stoics were Fataliſts by profeſſion; but they ſtill endeavoured, as well as they could, to reconcile fate with moral freedom *; and the firſt ſentence of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus contains a declaration, that "opinion, purſuit, deſire, and averſion, "and, in one word, whatever are our own "actions, are in our own power." We ſee in Cicero's fragment *De Fato*, and in the beginning of the ſixth book of Aulus Gellius, by what ſubterfuges and quibbling diſtinctions the Stoic Chryſippus reconciled the ſeemingly oppoſite principles of fate and free-will. I am not ſurpriſed, that what he ſays on this ſubject is unſatisfactory: for many Chriſtians have puzzled themſelves to no purpoſe in the ſame argument. But though the manner in which the divine preſcience is exerted be myſterious and inexplicable, it does not follow, that the freedom of our will is equally ſo. Of this we may be, and we are, competent judges. It is ſufficiently intimated to every man by his own experience; and every man is ſatisfied with

* "By Fate the Stoics ſeem to have underſtood a ſeries "of events appointed by the immutable counſels of God; or, "that law of his providence by which he governs the world. "It is evident by their writings, that they meant it in no "ſenſe which interferes with the liberty of human actions." See Mrs. Carter's admirable Introduction to her very elegant tranſlation of the works of Epictetus, § 17.

with this intimation, and by his conduct declares, that he truſts to it as certain and authentic. Nothing can be a clearer proof, that the ſentiment of moral liberty is one of the moſt powerful in human nature, than its having been ſo long able to maintain its ground, and often in oppoſition to other popular opinions apparently repugnant. The notion of fate has prevailed much in the world, and yet could never ſubvert this ſentiment even in the vulgar.---If it be aſked, where the vulgar opinions of antient times are to be found? I anſwer, that in the writings of the moſt popular poets we have a chance to find them more genuine than in ſyſtems of philoſophy.---To advance paradoxes, and conſequently to diſguiſe facts, is often the moſt effectual recommendation of a philoſopher: but a poet muſt conform himſelf to the general principles and manners of mankind; otherwiſe he can never become a general favourite.

Now the ſyſtem of Homer and Virgil concerning fate and free-will, is perfectly explicit. "Homer aſſigns three cauſes," I quote the words of Pope, "of all the good and evil "that happens in this world, which he takes "a particular care to diſtinguiſh. Firſt, the "will of God, ſuperior to all. Secondly, "deſtiny or fate, meaning the laws and or-

"der

" der of nature, affecting the conſtitutions " of men, and diſpoſing them to good or " evil, proſperity or misfortune; which the " Supreme Being, if it be his pleaſure, may " over-rule, (as Jupiter is inclined to do in the " caſe of Sarpedon*); but which he gene- " rally ſuffers to take effect. Thirdly, our " own free-will, which either by prudence " overcomes thoſe natural influences and " paſſions, or by folly ſuffers us to fall " under them †." In regard to ſome of the decrees of fate, Homer informs us, that they were conditional, or ſuch as could not take effect, except certain actions were performed by men. Thus Achilles had it in his power to continue at Troy, or to return home before the end of war. If he choſe to ſtay, his life would be ſhort and glorious; if to return, he was to enjoy peace and leiſure to a good old age‡. He prefers the former, though he well knew what was to follow:

* Iliad, xvi. 433.

† Iliad, i. 5. xix. 90. Odyſſ. i. 7. 39. See Pope's notes on theſe paſſages.

‖ Μήτης γαρ τί με φησὶ θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
Διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλοσδε—&c. Iliad ix. 415.

My fates long ſince by Thetis were diſclos'd,
And each alternate, life or fame, propos'd.
Here if I ſtay before the Trojan town,
Short is my date, but deathleſs my renown;
If I return, I quit immortal praiſe
For years on years, and long extended days. *Pope.*

On

follow: and I know not whether there be any other circumſtance in the character of this hero, except his love to his friend and to his father, which ſo powerfully recommends him to our regard. This gloomy reſolution inveſts him with a mornful dignity, the effects of which a reader of ſenſibility often feels at his heart, in a ſentiment made up of admiration, pity, and horror. But this by the by.——According to Virgil, the completion, even of the abſolute decrees of fate, may be retarded by the agency of beings inferior to Jupiter*: a certain term is fixed

On voit (ſays M. Dacier, in her note on this paſſage) partout dans Homere des marques qu'il avoit connu cette double deſtinée des hommes, ſi neceſſaire pour accorder le libre arbitre avec la predeſtination. En voicy un teſmoignage bien formel et bien exprès. Il y a deux chemins pour tous les hommes: s'ils prennent celuy-la, il leur arrivera telle choſe; s'ils prennent celui-cy, leur ſort ſera different.

Sophocles, in like manner, repreſents the decree of Deſtiny, concerning Ajax, as conditional. The anger of Minerva againſt that hero was to laſt only one day: if his friends kept him within doors during that ſpace, all would be well; if they ſuffered him to go abroad unattended, his death was inevitable. *Ajax Maſtig.* 772. 794. 818. Εἰ μεν ἔνδον μίαν (ſays the ſcholiaſt), σωζήσεται· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἀπόλλυται. διὰ τουτο δὲ τὸ δίπλοον τῆ μοιρᾳ δηλοῖ ὡς καὶ Ὁμήρος, Διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανατοίο τελόσδε.
Sophocles, apud H. Steph. 1588. *p.* 48.

* Non dabitur regnis (eſto) prohibere Latinis,
Atque immota manet fatis Lavinia conjux;
At trahere, atque moras tantis licet addere rebus.
Æneid. vii. 313.

fixed to every man, beyond which his life cannot laſt; but before this period arrives, he may die, by accidental misfortune, or deſerved puniſhment*: to virtue and vice neceſſity reaches not at all †.

In

* Nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat,
Sed miſera ante diem, ſubitoque accenſa furore,
Nondum ille flavum Proſerpina vertice crinem
Abſtulerat.———— *Æneid.* iv. 696

† Stat ſua cuique dies; breve et irreparabile tempus
Omnibus eſt vitæ; ſed famam extendere factis,
Hoc virtutis opus.———— *Æneid.* x. 467.

I agree with Servius (not. in Æneid. x.) that the philoſophical maxims to be found in poets are not always conſiſtent. The reaſon is plain: Poets imitate the ſentiments of people of different characters, placed in different circumſtances, and actuated by different paſſions; and nobody expects, that the language or thoughts, ſuitable to a certain character, placed in certain circumſtances, and actuated by certain paſſions, ſhould be conſiſtent with thoſe of a different character whoſe circumſtances and paſſions are different. But I cannot agree with that annotator, in ſuppoſing the paſſage quoted from the fourth book, inconſiſtent with what is quoted from the 10th; and that the former is according to the Epicurean, and the latter according to the Stoical, philoſophy. In the latter paſſage, it is ſaid, that a certain day or time is appointed by fate for the utmoſt limit of every man's life: in the former, the very ſame thing is implied; only it is ſaid further, that Dido died before her time; and there is nothing in the 10th book that inſinuates the impoſſibility of this. The ſentiments contained in theſe three quotations are conformable

to

In all the hiſtories I have read of ancient or modern, ſavage or civilized nations, I find the conduct of mankind has ever been ſuch as I ſhould expect from creatures poſſeſſed of moral freedom, and conſcious of it. Several forms of falſe religion, and ſome erroneous commentaries on the true, have impoſed tenets inconſiſtent with this freedom; but men have ſtill acted, notwithſtanding, as if they believed themſelves to be free. Creeds, expreſſed in general terms, may eaſily be impoſed on the ignorant, and the ſelfiſh; by the former they are miſunderſtood, by the latter diſregarded: but to overpower a natural inſtinct is a difficult task; and a doctrine which is eaſily ſwallowed when propoſed in general terms, may prove wholly diſguſtful when applied to a particular caſe.

"The belief of a deſtiny," ſays Mr. Macaulay in his hiſtory of St. Kilda *, "is "one of the ſtrongeſt articles of this people's "creed; and it will poſſibly be found upon "examination, that the common people, in "all ages, and in moſt countries, give into "the

to Homer's theology, and to one another; and it deſerves our notice, that the firſt comes from the mouth of Juno, the ſecond from the poet or his muſe, and the third from Jupiter himſelf; whence I infer, that they were agreeable to the poet's creed, or at leaſt to the popular creed of his age.

* P. 243.

" the ſame notion. At St. Kilda, fate and " providence are much the ſame thing. " After having explained theſe terms, I aſked " ſome of the people there, Whether it was " in their power to do good and evil? The " anſwer made by thoſe who were unac- " quainted with the ſyſtematical doctrines " of divinity was, That the queſtion was a " very childiſh one; as every man alive muſt " be conſcious, that he himſelf is a free " agent."----If it be true, as I believe it is, that the common people in moſt countries are inclined to acknowledge a deſtiny or fate; and if it be alſo true that they are conſcious of their own free agency notwithſtanding; this alone would convince me, though I had never conſulted my own experience, that the ſentiment of moral liberty is one of the ſtrongeſt in human nature. For how many of their vices might they not excuſe, if they could perſuade themſelves, or others, that theſe proceed from cauſes as independent on their will, as thoſe from which ſtorms, earthquakes, and eclipſes, ariſe, and the temperature of ſoils and ſeaſons, and the ſound and unſound conſtitutions of the human body! Such a perſuaſion, however, we find not that they have at any time entertained or attempted; from which I think there is

good

good reaſon to conclude, that it is not in their power.

There is no principle in man, religion excepted, that has produced ſo great revolutions, and makes ſuch a figure in the hiſtory of the world, as the love of political liberty: of which indeed all men do not form the ſame notion: ſome placing it in the power of doing what they pleaſe, others in the power of doing what is lawful; ſome in being governed by laws of their own making, and others in being governed by equitable laws, and tried by equitable judges: —but of which it is univerſally agreed, that it leaves in our power many of our moſt important actions. And yet, ſay Mr. HUME and the Fataliſts, all things happen through irreſiſtable neceſſity, and there is not in the human mind any idea of any power. Strange! that ſo many, eſpecially among the beſt, the braveſt, and the wiſeſt of men, ſhould have been ſo paſſionately enamoured of an inconceivable non-entity, as to abandon for its ſake, their eaſe, their health, their fortunes, and their lives! At this rate we are wonderfully miſtaken, when we ſpeak of Do Quixote as a madman, and of Leonida Brutus, Wallace, Hampden, Paoli, as wiſ and good, and great! The caſe it ſeems i juſt the reverſe: theſe heroes deſerve no oth na

name than that of raving bedlamites; and the illuſtrious knight of La Mancha, to whom the object of his valour was at leaſt *a conceivable phantom*, was a perſon of excellent underſtanding, and moſt perfect knowledge of the world!

Do not all mankind diſtinguiſh between mere harm and injury? Is there one rational being unacquainted with this diſtinction? If a man were to act as if he did not comprehend it, would not the world pronounce him a fool? And yet this diſtinction is perfectly incomprehenſible, except we ſuppoſe ſome beings to act neceſſarily, and others from free choice. A man gives me a blow, and inſtantly I feel reſentment: but a byſtander informs me, that the man is afflicted with the epilepſy, which deprives him of the power of managing his limbs; that the blow was not only without deſign, but contrary to his intention, and that he could not poſſibly have prevented it. My reſentment is gone, though I ſtill feel pain from the blow. Can there be any miſtake in this experience? Can I think that I feel reſentment, when in reality I do not feel it? that I feel no reſentment, when I am conſcious of the contrary? And if I feel reſentment in the one caſe, and not in the other, it is certain there ſeems to me to be ſome diſſimilitude between them. But

it

it is only in reſpect of the intention of him who gave the blow that there can be any diſſimilitude: for all that I learn from the information by which my reſentment was extinguiſhed is, that what I ſuppoſed to proceed from an evil intention, did really proceed from no evil intention, but from the neceſſary effect of a material cauſe, in which the will had no concern. What ſhall we ſay then? that the diſtinction between injury and mere harm, acknowledged by all mankind, does imply, that all mankind ſuppoſe the actions of moral beings to be free? or ſhall we ſay, that reſentment, though it ariſes uniformly in all men on certain occaſions, does yet proceed from no cauſe; the actions, which do give riſe to it, being in every reſpect the ſame with thoſe, which do not give riſe to it?

Further, all men expect, with full aſſurance, that fire will burn to-morrow; but all men do not with full aſſurance expect, that a thief will ſteal to-morrow, or a miſer refuſe an alms to a beggar, or a debauchee commit an act of intemperance, even though opportunities offer. If I had found on blowing up my fire this morning, that the flame was cold, and converted water into ice, I ſhould

ſhould have been much more aſtoniſhed than if I had detected a man reputed honeſt in the commiſſion of an act of theft. The former I would call a prodigy, a contradiction to the known laws of nature: of the latter I ſhould ſay, that I am ſorry for it, and could never have expected it; but I ſhould not ſuppoſe any prodigy in the caſe. All general rules, that regard the influence of human characters on human actions, admit of exceptions; but the general laws of matter admit of none. Ice was cold, and fire hot, ever ſince the creation; hot ice, and cold fire, are, according to the preſent conſtitution of the world, impoſſible: but that a man ſhould ſteal to-day, who never ſtole before, is no impoſſibility at all. The coldneſs of the flame I ſhould doubtleſs think owing to ſome cauſe, and the diſhoneſty of the man to ſome ſtrange revolution in his ſentiments and principles; but I never could bring myſelf to think the man as paſſive, in regard to this revolution, as the fire muſt be ſuppoſed to be, in regard to the cauſe by which its nature is changed. The man has done what he ought not to have done, what he might have prevented, and what he deſerves puniſhment for not preventing;—this is the language of all rational beings:--but the fire is

wholly

wholly unconſcious and inert. Who will ſay that there is the ſame neceſſity in both caſes!

Fataliſts are fond of inferring moral neceſſity from phyſical, in the way of analogy. But ſome of their arguments on this topic are moſt ridiculouſly abſurd. "There is," ſays Voltaire's *Ignorant Philoſopher*, "nothing "without a cauſe. An effect without a "cauſe are words without meaning. Every "time I have a will, this can only be in con- "ſequence of my judgment good or bad; "this judgment is neceſſary; therefore ſo is "my will."— All this hath been ſaid by others: but what follows is, I believe, peculiar to this *Ignorant Philoſopher*. "In effect," continues he, "it would be very ſingular, "that all nature, all the planets, ſhould obey "eternal laws, and that there ſhould be a little "animal, five feet high, who, in contempt "of theſe laws, could act as he pleaſed, "ſolely according to his caprice." Singular! aye ſingular indeed. So very ſingular, that yours, Sir, if I miſtake not, is the firſt human brain that ever conceived ſuch a notion. If man be free, no body ever dreamed that he made himſelf ſo in contempt of the laws of nature; it is in conſequence of a law of nature that he is a free agent. But paſſing this, let us attend to the reaſoning. The planets are not free agents; ——therefore it would be

very ſingular, that man ſhould be one. Not a whit more ſingular, than that this ſame animal of five feet ſhould perceive, and think, and read, and write, and ſpeak; attributes, which no aſtronomer of my acquaintance has ever ſuppoſed to belong to the planets, notwithſtanding their brilliant appearance, and ſtupendous magnitude *. We do too much honour to ſuch reaſoning, when we reply to it in the bold but ſublime words of a great genius:

Know'ſt thou th' importance of a ſoul immortal?
Behold this midnight glory, worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
Ten thouſand add; and twice ten thouſand more;
Then weigh the whole; ONE SOUL outweights them all,
And calls th' aſtoniſhing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor. *Complaint, Night 7.*

Mr.

* Mr. Voltaire has often laboured, with more zeal than ſucceſs, to prove, amongſt other ſtrange doctrines, that Shakeſpeare and Milton were no great poets. What if I ſhould here help him to an argument as deciſive on that point as any he has yet invented, and framed exactly according to the rules of his own logic, as exemplified in the paſſage now before us? "The Engliſh ſay, that Shakeſpeare and Milton were great "poets. Now it is well known, that neither Plinlimmon "in Wales, nor Mealfourvonny in Scotland, neither Lebanon "in Syria, nor Atlas in Mauritania, ever wrote one good "verſe in their days; and yet each of theſe mountains ex- "ceeds in corporeal magnitude ten thouſand Miltons and as "many Shakeſpeares. But it would be very ſingular, that "maſſes of ſo great diſtinction ſhould never have been able to "put pen to paper with any ſucceſs, and yet that no fewer "than two pieces of Engliſh fleſh and blood, ſcarce ſix feet "long, ſhould, in contempt of nature and all her laws, have "penned poems that are entitled to general admiration!"

Mr. HUME, in an eſſay on this ſubject, maintains, that the appearances in the moral and material world are equally uniform, and equally neceſſary; nay, and acknowledged to be ſo, both by philoſophers and by the vulgar. In proof of this, he prudently confines himſelf to general topics, on which he declaims with ſome plauſibility. Had he deſcended to particular inſtances, as we have done, the fallacy of his reaſoning would have appeared at once. Human nature has been nearly the ſame in all ages. True. For all men poſſeſs nearly the ſame faculties, which are employed about nearly the ſame objects, and deſtined to operate within the ſame narrow ſphere. And if a man have power to chuſe one of two things, to act or not to act, he has all the liberty we contend for. How is it poſſible, then, that human nature, taken in the groſs, ſhould not be found nearly the ſame in all ages! But if we come to particulars, we ſhall not perhaps find two human minds exactly alike. In two of the moſt congenial characters on earth, the ſame cauſes will not produce the ſame effects; nay, the ſame cauſes will not always produce the ſame effects even in the ſame character.

Some Fataliſts deny, that our internal feelings are in favour of moral liberty. "It

" is true," ſays a worthy and ingenious, tho' fanciful, author, " that a man by internal " feeling may prove his own free will, if " by free will be meant the power of doing " what a man wills or deſires; or of reſiſt- " ing the motives of ſenſuality, ambition, " &c. that is free-will in the popular and " practical ſenſe. Every perſon may eaſily " recollect inſtances, where he has done theſe " ſeveral things. But theſe are intirely fo- " reign to the preſent queſtion. To prove " that a man has free-will in the ſenſe oppo- " ſite to mechaniſm, he ought to feel, that " he can do different things while the mo- " tives remain preciſely the ſame. And " here I apprehend the internal feelings are " intirely againſt free-will, where the motives " are of a ſufficient magnitude to be evident: " where they are not, nothing can be prov- " ed *."—Queſtions of this kind would be more eaſily ſolved, if author's would explain their doctrine by examples. When this is not done, we cannot always be ſure that we underſtand their meaning, eſpecially in abſtract ſubjects, where language, after all our care, is often equivocal and inade- quate. If I rightly underſtand this author, and am allowed to examine his principles by my own experience, I muſt conclude, that he

* Hartley's Obſervations on man, vol. 1. p. 507.

he very much miſtakes the fact. Let us take an example. A man is tempted to the commiſſion of a crime: his motive to commit, is the love of money, or the gratification of appetite: his motive to abſtain, is a regard to duty, or to reputation. Suppoſe him to weigh theſe motives in his mind, for an hour, a day, or a week; and ſuppoſe, that, during this ſpace, no additional conſideration occurs to him on either ſide: which, I think, may be ſuppoſed, becauſe I know it is poſſible, and I believe often happens. While his mind is in this ſtate, the motives remain preciſely the ſame: and yet it is to me inconceivable, that he ſhould at any time, during this ſpace, feel himſelf under a neceſſity of committing, or under a neceſſity of not committing, the crime. He is indeed under a neceſſity either to do, or not to do: but every man, in ſuch a caſe, feels that he has it in his power to chuſe the one or the other. At leaſt, in all my experience, I have never been conſcious, nor had any reaſon to believe, that other men were conſcious, of any ſuch neceſſity as the author here ſpeaks of.

Again: Suppoſe two men, in the circumſtances above-mentioned, to yield to the temptation, and to be differently affected by a review

a review of their conduct; the one repining at fortune, or fate, or providence, for having placed him in too tempting a ſituation, and ſollicited him by motives too powerful to be reſiſted; the other blaming and upbraiding himſelf for yielding to the bad motive, and reſiſting the good:——I would aſk, which of theſe two kinds of remorſe or regret is the moſt rational? The firſt, according to the doctrine of the Fataliſts; the laſt, according to the univerſal opinion of mankind. No divine, no moraliſt, no man of ſenſe, ever ſuppoſes true penitence to begin, till the criminal become conſcious, that he has done, or neglected, ſomething which he ought not to have done or neglected: a ſentiment which would be not only abſurd, but impoſſible, if all criminals and guilty perſons believed, from internal feeling, that what is done could not have been prevented. Whenever you can ſatisfy a man of this, he may continue to bewail himſelf, or repine at fortune; but his repentance is at an end. It is always a part, and too often the whole, of the language of remorſe: "I wiſh "the deed had never been done; wretch "that I was, not to reſiſt the temptation!" Does this imply, that the penitent ſuppoſes himſelf to have been under a neceſſity of committing the action, and that his conduct could

could not poſſibly have been different from what it is? To me it ſeems to imply juſt the contrary. And am not I a competent judge of this matter? Have not I been in theſe circumſtances? Has not this been often the language of my ſoul? And will any man pretend to ſay, that I do not know my own thoughts, or that he knows them better than I?—All men, indeed, have but too frequent experience of at leaſt this part of repentance: then why multiply words, when by facts it is ſo eaſy to determine the controverſy?

Other Fataliſts acknowledge, that the free agency of man is univerſally felt and believed: That tho' man in truth is a neceſſary agent, having all his actions determined by fixed and immutable laws; yet, this being concealed from him, he acts with the conviction of being a free agent *.——Concealed from him! Who conceals it? Does the author of nature conceal it,—and do theſe writers diſcover it! What deference is not due to the judgment of a metaphyſician, whoſe ſagacity is ſo irreſiſtably (I had almoſt ſaid omnipotently) penetrating! But, Gentlemen, as ye

* In the former edition of this Eſſay, a particular book was here ſpecified and quoted. But I have lately heard, that in a ſecond edition of that book, which, however, I have not yet ſeen, the author has made ſome alterations, by which he gets clear of the abſurdity expoſed in this paſſage.

ye are powerful, ye ſhould have been merciful. It was not kind to rob poor mortals of this crumb of comfort which had been provided for them in their ignorance; nor generous to publiſh ſo openly the ſecrets of Heaven, and thus baffle the deſigns of Providence by a few ſtrokes of your pen!——In truth, metaphyſic is a perplexing affair to the paſſions, as well as to the judgment. Some times it is ſo abſurd, that not to be merry is impoſſible; and ſometimes ſo impious, that not to be angry were unpardonable: but often it partakes ſo much of both qualities, that one knows not with what temper of mind to conſider it:

" To laugh, were want of goodneſs, and of grace;
" And to be grave, exceeds all power of face."

But why inſiſt ſo long on the univerſal acknowledgment of man's free agency? To me it is as evident, that all men believe themſelves free, as that all men think. I cannot ſee the heart; I judge of the ſentiments of others from their outward behaviour; from the higheſt to the loweſt, as far as hiſtory and experience can carry me, I find the conduct of human beings ſimilar in this reſpect to my own: and of my own free agency I have never yet been able to entertain the leaſt doubt. " Here then we have an inſtance of

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" a doctrine advanced by ſome philoſophers, " in direct contradiction to the general belief " of all men in all ages." This is a repetition of the firſt remark formerly made on the non-exiſtence of matter.

2. The ſecond was to this purpoſe: " The " reaſoning by which this doctrine is ſup- " ported, though long accounted unanſwer- " able, did never produce a ſerious and " ſteady conviction; common ſenſe ſtill de- " clared it to be falſe; we were ſorry to " find the powers of human reaſon ſo li- " mited as not to afford a logical confuta- " tion of it; we were convinced it merited " confutation, and flattered ourſelves that " one time or other it would be confu- " ted."

I ſhall here take it for granted, that the ſcheme of neceſſity has not as yet been fully confuted; and on this ſuppoſition (which the Fataliſts can hardly fail to acknowledge a fair one) I would aſk, whether the remark juſt now quoted be applicable to the reaſonings urged in behalf of that ſcheme? My experience tells me, it is. After giving the advocates for neceſſity a fair hearing, my belief is exactly the ſame as before. I am puzzled perhaps, but not convinced, no not in the leaſt degree. In reading ſome late

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eſſays on this ſubject, I find many things allowed to paſs without ſcruple, which I cannot admit: and when I have got to the end, and aſk myſelf, whether I am a free or a neceſſary agent, nature recurs upon me ſo irreſiſtibly, that the inveſtigation I have juſt finiſhed ſeems (as Shakeſpeare ſays) "like "the fierce vexation of a dream," which, while it laſted, had ſome reſemblance of reality, but now, when it is gone, appears to have been altogether a deluſion. This is prejudice, you ſay; be it ſo. Before the confutation of BERKELEY's ſyſtem, would it have been called prejudice not to be convinced by his arguments? I know not but it might; but I am ſure, that of ſuch prejudice no honeſt man, nor lover of truth, needs be aſhamed. I confeſs, that when I enter upon the controverſy in queſtion, I am not wholly indifferent; I am a little biaſſed in favour of common ſenſe, and I cannot help it: yet if the reaſoning were concluſive, I am confident it would breed in my mind ſome ſuſpicion, that my ſentiment of moral liberty is ambiguous. As I experience nothing of this kind, my conviction remaining the ſame as before, what muſt I infer? Surely I muſt infer, and I ſin againſt my own underſtanding if I do not infer, that though the reaſoning be ſubtle, the doctrine is abſurd.

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But what if a man be really convinced by that reaſonning, that he is a neceſſary agent? —Then I expect he will think and act according to his conviction. If he continue to act and think as he did before, and as I and the reſt of the world do now, he muſt pardon me if I ſhould ſuſpect his conviction to be inſincere. For let it be obſerved, that the Fataliſts are not ſatisfied with calling their doctrine probable; they affirm, that it is certain, and reſts on evidence not inferior to demonſtration. If, therefore, it convince at all, it muſt convince thoroughly. Between rejecting it as utterly falſe, and receiving it as undeniably true, there is no medium to a conſiderate perſon. And let it be obſerved further, that the changes which the real belief of fatality muſt produce in the conduct and ſentiments of men, are not ſlight and imperceptible, but, as will appear afterwards, important and ſtriking. If you ſay, that the inſtincts of your nature, the cuſtoms of the world, and the force of human laws, oblige you to act like free agents, you acknowledge fatality to be contrary to nature and common ſenſe; which is the point I want to prove.

Clay is not more obſequious to the potter, than words to the ſkilful diſputant. They

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may be made to aſſume almoſt any form, to enforce almoſt any doctrine. So true it is, that much may be ſaid on either ſide of moſt queſtions, that we have known dealers in controverſy, who were always of the ſame mind with the author whom they read laſt. We have ſeen theories of morality deduced from pride, from ſympathy, from ſelf-love, from benevolence; and all ſo plauſible, as would ſurpriſe one who is unacquainted with the ambiguities of language. Of theſe the advocates for ſimple truth are leſs careful to avail themſelves, than their paradoxical antagoniſts. The arguments of the former, being more obvious, ſtand leſs in need of illuſtration; thoſe of the latter require all the embelliſhments of eloquence and refinement to recommend them. Robbers ſeldom go abroad without arms; they examine every corner and countenance with a penetrating eye, which habitual diſtruſt and circumſpection have rendered intenſely ſagacious: the honeſt man walks careleſsly about his buſineſs, intending no harm, and ſuſpecting none. It cannot be denied, that philoſophers do often, in the uſe of words, impoſe on themſelves as well as on others; an ambiguous word ſlipping in by accident will often perplex a whole ſubject, to the equal ſurpriſe of both

both parties; and perhaps, in a long courſe of years, the cauſe of this perplexity ſhall not be diſcovered. This was never more remarkably the caſe, than in the controverſy about the exiſtence of matter; and this no doubt is one great hindrance to the utter confutation of the doctrine of neceſſity. Fataliſts indeed, make a ſtir, and ſeem much in earneſt, about ſettling the ſignification of words: but "words beget words," as Bacon well obſerveth; and it cannot be expected, that they who are intereſted in ſupporting a ſyſtem will be ſcrupulouſly impartial in their definitions.

With a few of theſe a theoriſt commonly begins his ſyſtem. This has the appearance of fairneſs and perſpicuity. We hold it for a maxim, that a man may uſe words in any ſenſe he pleaſes, provided he explain the ſenſe in which he uſes them; and we think it captious to find fault with words. We therefore are eaſily prevailed on to admit his definitions, which are generally plauſible, and not apparently repugnant to the analogy of language. But the underſtanding of the author when he writes, and that of the ſtudent when he reads them, are in very different circumſtances. The former knows his ſyſtem already, and adapts his definitions to it:

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the latter is ignorant of the ſyſtem, and therefore can have no notion of the tendency of the definitions. Beſides, every ſyſtem is in ſome degree obſcure to one who is but beginning to ſtudy it; and this obſcurity ſerves to diſguiſe whatever in the preliminary illuſtrations is forced or inexplicit. Thus the mind of the moſt candid and moſt attentive reader is prepared for the reception of error, long before he has any ſuſpicion of the author's real deſign. And then, the more he is accuſtomed to uſe words in a certain ſignification, the more he is diſpoſed to think it natural; ſo that, the further he advances in the ſyſtem, he is ſtill more and more reconciled to it. Need we wonder then at the variety of moral ſyſtems? need we wonder to ſee man's judgment ſo eaſily, and often ſo egregiouſly, miſled, by abſtract reaſonning? need we wonder at the ſucceſs of any theoriſt, who has a tolerable command of language, and a moderate ſhare of cunning, provided his ſyſtem be well-timed, and adapted to the manners and principles of his age? Neither need we wonder to ſee the groſſeſt and moſt deteſtable abſurdities recommended by ſingular plauſibility of argument, and ſuch as may for a time impoſe even on the intelligent and ſagacious; till at laſt,

laſt, when the author's deſign becomes manifeſt, common ſenſe begins to operate, and men have recourſe to their inſtinctive and intutive ſentiments, as the moſt effectual ſecurity againſt the aſſaults of the logician.

Further, previous to all influence from habit and education, the intellectual abilities of different men are very different in reſpect of reaſoning, as well as of common ſenſe. Some men, ſagacious enough in perceiving truth, are but ill qualified to reaſon about it; while others, not ſuperior in common ſenſe, or intuitive ſagacity, are much more dextrous in deviſing and confuting arguments. If you propoſe a ſophiſm to the latter, you are at once contradicted and confuted: the former, though they cannot confute you, are perhaps equally ſenſible of your falſe doctrine, and unfair reaſoning; they know, that what you ſay is not true, though they cannot tell in what reſpect it is falſe. Perhaps all that is wanting to enable them to confute as well as contradict, is only a little practice in ſpeaking and wrangling; but ſurely this affects not the truth or falſehood of propoſitions. What is falſe is as really ſo to the perſon who perceives its falſity, without being able to prove it, as to him who both perceives and proves; and it

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is equally falſe, before I learn logic, and after.—Is it not therefore highly unreaſonable to expect conviction from every antagoniſt who cannot confute you, and to aſcribe to prejudice what is owing to the irreſiſtible impulſe of unerring nature?

I have converſed with many people of ſenſe on the ſubject of this controverſy concerning liberty and neceſſity. To the greater part, the arguments of Clarke and others, in vindication of liberty, ſeemed quite ſatisfying; others owned themſelves puzzled with the ſubtleties of thoſe who took the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion; ſome repoſed with full aſſurance on that conſciouſneſs of liberty which every man feels in his own breaſt: in a word, as far as my experience goes, I have found all the impartial, the moſt ſagacious, and moſt virtuous, part of mankind, enemies to fatality in their hearts; willing to conſider the arguments for it as rather ſpecious than ſolid; and diſpoſed to receive, with joy and thankfulneſs, a thorough vindication of human liberty, and a logical confutation of the oppoſite doctrine.

3. It has been ſaid, That philoſophers are anſwerable, not for the conſequences, but only for the truth, of their tenets; and that, if a doctrine be true, its being attended with

with diſagreeable conſequences will not render it falſe. We readily acquieſce in this remark; but we imagine it cannot be meant of any truth but what is certain and incontrovertible. No genuine truth did ever of itſelf produce effects inconſiſtent with real utility *. But many principles paſs for truth, which are far from deſerving that honourable appellation. Some give it to all doctrines which have been defended with ſubtlety, and which, whether ſeriouſly believed or not, have never been logically confuted. But to affirm, that all ſuch doctrines are certainly true, would argue the moſt contemptible ignorance of human language, and human nature. It is therefore abſurd to ſay, that the bad conſequences of admitting ſuch doctrines ought not to be urged as arguments againſt them.—Now, there are many perſons in the world, of moſt reſpectable underſtanding, who would be extremely averſe to acknowledge, that the doctrine of neceſſity has ever been demonſtrated beyond all poſſibility of doubt. I may therefore be permitted to conſider it as a controvertible tenet, and to expoſe the abſurdities and dangerous conſe-

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* Ζητῶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὑφ' ἧς οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἐβλάβη.
Marc. Antonin.

quences with which the belief of it may and muſt be attended.

Mr. HUME endeavours to raiſe a prejudice againſt this method of refutation. He probably foreſaw, that the tendency of his principles would be urged as an argument againſt them; and being ſomewhat apprehenſive of the conſequences, as well he might, he inſinuates, that all ſuch reaſoning is no better than perſonal invective. "There is no me-"thod of reaſoning," ſays he, "more com-"mon, and yet none more blameable, than "in philoſophical debates to endeavour the "refutation of any hypotheſis, by a pretence "of its dangerous conſequences to religion "and morality. When any opinion leads "into abſurdities, it is certainly falſe; but "it is not certain that an opinion is falſe, "becauſe it is of dangerous conſequence. "Such topics therefore ought entirely to be "forborn; as ſerving nothing to the diſco-"very of truth, but only to make the per-"ſon of an antagoniſt odious*." If your philoſophy be ſuch, that its conſequences cannot be unfolded without rendering your perſon odious, pray, Mr. HUME, who is to blame? you, who contrive and publiſh it; or I, who criticiſe it? There is a kind of philoſophy ſo ſalutary in its effects, as to endear

* Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, part 2.

dear the perſon of the author to every good man: why is not yours of this kind? If it is not, as you yourſelf ſeem to apprehend, do you think, that I ought to applaud your principles, or ſuffer them to paſs unexamined, even though I am certain of their pernicious tendency? or that, out of reſpect to your perſon, I ought not to put others on their guard againſt them? Surely you cannot be ſo blinded by ſelf-admiration, as to think it the duty of any man to ſacrifice the intereſt of mankind to your intereſt, or rather to your reputation as a metaphyſical writer. If you do think ſo, I muſt take the liberty to differ from your judgment in this, as in many other matters.

Nor can I agree to what our author ſays of this method of reaſoning, that it tends nothing to the diſcovery of truth. Does not every thing tend to the diſcovery of truth, that diſpoſes men to think for themſelves, and to conſider opinions with attention, before they adopt them? And have not many well-meaning perſons raſhly adopted a plauſible opinion on the ſuppoſition of its being harmleſs, who, if they had been aware of its bad tendency, would have proceeded with more caution, and made a better uſe of their underſtanding?

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This is truly a notable expedient for determining controverſy in favour of licentious theories. An author publiſhes a book, in which are many doctrines fatal to human happineſs, and ſubverſive of human ſociety. If, from a regard to truth, and to mankind, we endeavour to expoſe them in their proper colours, and, by diſplaying their dangerous and abſurd conſequences, to deter men from raſhly adopting them without examination; our adverſary immediately exclaims, "This "is not fair reaſoning; this is perſonal in-"vective." Were the ſentiments of the public to be regulated by this exclamation, licentious writers might do what miſchief they pleaſed, and no man durſt appear in oppoſition, without being hooted at for his want of breeding.—It is happy for us all, that the law is not to be browbeaten by inſinuations of this kind; otherwiſe we ſhould hear ſome folks exclaim againſt it every day, as one of the moſt ungenteel things in the world. And truly they would have reaſon: for it cannot be denied, that an indictment at the Old Bailey has much the air of a perſonal invective; and baniſhment, or burning in the hand, amounts nearly to a perſonal aſſault; nay, both have often this expreſs end, to make the perſon of the criminal odi-

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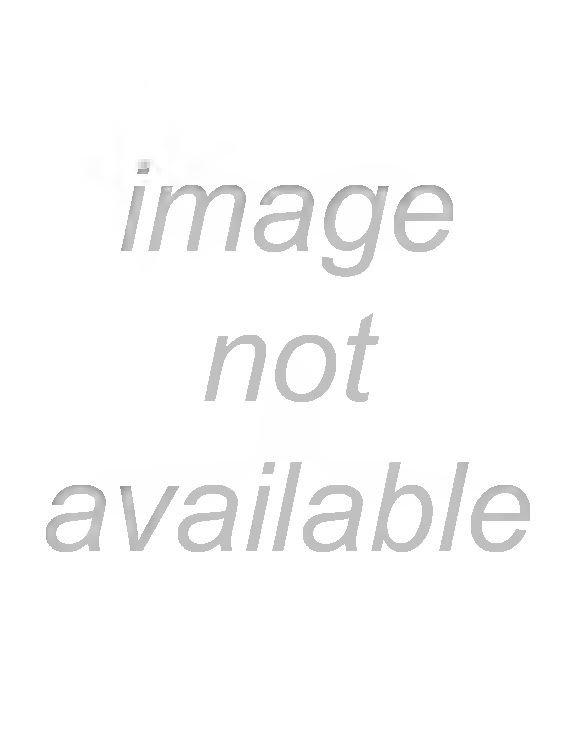
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conſequences that may be drawn from it.—To which I now return.

Some of the Fataliſts are willing to reconcile their ſyſtem with our natural notions of moral good and evil; but all they have been able to do is, to remove the difficulty a ſtep or two further off. But the moſt conſiderable of that party are not ſolicitous to render theſe points conſiſtent. If they can only eſtabliſh neceſſity, they leave natural religion to ſhift for itſelf. Mr. HUME in particular affirms, that on his principles it is impoſſible for natural reaſon to vindicate the character of the Deity *. Had this author been poſſeſſed of one grain of that modeſty which he recommends in the concluſion of his eſſay; had he thought it worth his while to ſacrifice a little pittance of ignominious applauſe to the happineſs of human kind; he would have ſhuddered at the thought of inculcating a doctrine which he knew to be irreconcileable with this great firſt principle of religion; and of which, therefore, he muſt have known, that it tended to overturn the only durable foundation of human ſociety and human happineſs.

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* Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, *ſub fin.*

The advocates for liberty, on the other hand, have univerſally eſpouſed the cauſe of virtue, and zealouſly aſſerted the infinite wiſdom and purity of the divine nature. Now, I confeſs, that this very conſideration is, according to my notion of things, a ſtrong argument in favour of the laſt mentioned doctrine. Here are two opinions; the one inconſiſtent with the firſt principles of natural religion, as ſome of thoſe who maintain it acknowledge, as well as with the experience, the belief, and the practice, of the generality of rational beings; the other perfectly conſiſtent with religion, conſcience, and common ſenſe. If the reader believe, with me, that the Deity is infinitely good and wiſe, he cannot balance a moment between them; nor heſitate to affirm, that the univerſal belief of the former would produce much miſchief and miſery to mankind. If he be prepoſſeſſed in favour of fatality, he ought, however, before he acquieſce in it as true, to be well aſſured, that the evidences of natural religion, particularly of the divine exiſtence and attributes, are weaker than the proofs that have been urged in behalf of neceſſity. But will any one ſay, that this doctrine admits of a proof, as unexceptionable as that by which we evince the being and attributes of God? I appeal to his

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own heart, I appeal to the experience and conſciouſneſs of mankind;——— are you as thoroughly convinced, that no paſt action of your life could poſſibly have been prevented, and that no future action can poſſibly be contingent, as that God is infinitely wiſe, powerful and good?—— Examine the evidence of both propoſitions, examine with candour the inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of your own mind;—and then tell me, whether you find atheiſm or man's moral liberty hardeſt to be believed.

Perhaps I ſhall be told, that the belief of moral liberty is attended with equal difficulties; for that, to reconcile the contingency of human actions with the preſcience of God, is as impoſſible, as to reconcile neceſſity with his goodneſs and wiſdom. Others have anſwered this objection at length; I make therefore only two brief remarks upon it. 1. As it implies not any reflection on the divine power, to ſay that it cannot perform impoſſibilities; ſo neither, I preſume, does it imply any reflection on his knowledge, to ſay, that he cannot forſee as certain, what is really not certain, but only contingent. Yet he ſees all poſſible effects of all poſſible cauſes; and our freedom to chuſe good or evil can no more be conceived to interfere with the final purpoſes of his providence,

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than our power of moving our limbs is inconſiſtent with our inability to remove mountains. 2. No man will take it upon him to ſay, that he diſtinctly underſtands the manner in which the Deity acts, perceives, and knows: but the incomprehenſibleneſs of his nature will never induce men to doubt his exiſtence and attributes, unleſs there be men who fancy themſelves infallible, and of infinite capacity. Shall I then conclude, becauſe I cannot fully comprehend the manner in which the divine preſcience operates, that therefore the Deity is not infinitely perfect? or that, therefore, I cannot be certain of the truth of a ſentiment which is warranted by my conſtant experience, and by that of all mankind? Shall I ſay, that becauſe my knowledge is not infinite, therefore I have no knowledge? Becauſe I know not when I ſhall die, does it follow, that I cannot be certain of my being now alive? Becauſe God has not told me every thing, ſhall I refuſe to believe what he has told me? To draw ſuch a concluſion from ſuch premiſes, is, in my judgment, as contrary to reaſon, as to ſay, that, becauſe I am ignorant of the cauſe of magnetical attraction, therefore I ought not to believe that the needle points to the north.—That I am a free agent, I know and believe; that God foreſees

ſeee whatever can be foreſeen, as he can do whatever can be done, I alſo know and believe: nor have the Fataliſts ever proved, nor can they ever prove, that the one belief is inconſiſtent with the other.

The aſſerters of human liberty have always maintained, that to believe all actions and intentions neceſſary, is the ſame thing as to believe, that man is not an accountable being, or, in other words, no moral agent. And indeed this notion is natural to every perſon who has the courage to truſt his own experience, without ſeeking to puzzle plain matter of fact with verbal diſtinctions and metaphyſical refinement. But, it is ſaid, the ſenſe of moral beauty and turpitude ſtill remains with us, even after we are convinced, that all actions and intentions are neceſſary; that this ſenſe maketh us moral agents; and, therefore, that our moral agency is perfectly conſiſtent with our neceſſary agency. But this is nothing to the purpoſe; it is putting us off with mere words. For what is moral agency, and what is implied in it? This at leaſt muſt be implied in it, that we ought to do ſome things, and not to do others. But if every intention and action of my life is fixed by eternal laws, which I can neither elude nor alter, it is as abſurd to ſay to me, You ought to be honeſt to-morrow, as to ſay, You

ought

ought to ſtop the motion of the planets to-morrow. Unleſs ſome events depend upon my determination, *ought*, and *ought not*, have no meaning when applied to me. Moral agency further implies, that we are accountable for our conduct; and that if we do what we ought not to do, we deſerve blame and puniſhment. My conſcience tells me, that I am accountable for thoſe actions only that are in my own power; and neither blames nor approves, in myſelf or in others, that conduct which is the effect, not of choice, but of neceſſity. Convince me, that all my actions are equally neceſſary, and you ſilence my conſcience for ever, or at leaſt prove it to be a fallacious and impertinent monitor: you will then convince me, that all circumſpection is unneceſſary, and all remorſe abſurd. And is it a matter of little moment, whether I believe my moral feelings authentic and true, or equivocal and fallacious? Can any principle be of more fatal conſequence to me, or to ſociety, than to believe, that the dictates of conſcience are falſe, unreaſonable, or inſignificant? Yet this is one certain effect of my becoming a Fataliſt, or even ſceptical in regard to moral liberty.

I obſerve, that when a man's underſtanding begins to be ſo far perverted by debauchery, as to make him imagine his crimes

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unavoidable, from that moment he begins to think them innocent, and deems it a ſufficient apology, that in reſpect of them he is no longer a free, but a neceſſary agent. The drunkard pleads his conſtitution, the blaſphemer urges the invincible force of habit, and the ſenſualiſt would have us believe, that his appetites are too ſtrong to be reſiſted. Suppoſe all men ſo far perverted as to argue in the ſame manner with regard to crimes of every kind;—then it is certain, that all men would be equally diſpoſed to think all crimes innocent. And what would be the conſequence? Licentiouſneſs, miſery, and deſolation, irremediable and univerſal. If God intended that men ſhould be happy, and that the human race ſhould continue for many generations, he certainly intended alſo that men ſhould believe themſelves free, moral, and accountable creatures.

Suppoſing it poſſible for a man to act upon the belief of his being a neceſſary agent, let us ſee how he would behave in ſome of the common affairs of life. He does me an injury. I go to him and remonſtrate. You will excuſe me, ſays he; I was put upon it by one on whom I am dependent, and who threatened me with beggary and perdition if I refuſed to comply. I acknowledge this to be a conſiderable alleviation of the poor man's guilt.

guilt. Next day he repeats the injury; and, on my renewing my remonſtrances, Truly, ſays he, I was offered ſixpence to do it; or I did it to pleaſe my humour: but I know you will pardon me, when I tell you, that as all motives are the neceſſary cauſes of the actions that proceed from them, it follows that all motives productive of the ſame action are irreſiſtible, and therefore, in reſpect of the agent, equally ſtrong: I am therefore as innocent now as I was formerly; for the event has proved, that the motive ariſing from the offer of ſixpence, or from the impulſe of whim, was as effectual in producing the action which you call an injury, as the motive ariſing from the fear of ruin. Notwithſtanding this fine ſpeech, I ſhould be afraid, that theſe principles, if perſiſted in, and acted upon, would ſoon bring the poor Fataliſt to Tyburn or Bedlam.

Will you promiſe to aſſiſt me to-morrow with your labour, advice, or intereſt? No, ſays the practical Fataliſt; I can promiſe nothing: for my conduct to-morrow will certainly be determined by the motive that then happens to predominate. Let your promiſe, ſay I, be your motive. How can you be ſo ignorant, he replies, as to imagine that our motives to action are in our own power! O ſad, O ſad! you muſt ſtudy

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metaphyſic, indeed you muſt. Why, Sir, our motives to action are obtruded upon us by irreſiſtible neceſſity. Perhaps they ariſe, immediately, from ſome paſſion, judgment, fancy, or (if you pleaſe) volition; but this volition, fancy, judgment, or paſſion—— what is it? an effect without a cauſe? No, no; it is neceſſarily excited by ſome idea, object, or notion, which preſents itſelf independently on me, and in conſequence of ſome extrinſick cauſe, the operation of which I can neither foreſee nor prevent.—Where is the man who would chuſe this Fataliſt for his friend, companion, or fellow-citizen? who will ſay, that ſociety could at all ſubſiſt, if the generality of mankind were to think, and ſpeak, and act, on ſuch principles?

But, ſays the Fataliſt, is it not eaſy to imagine caſes in which the men who believe themſelves free, would act the part of fools or knaves? Nothing indeed is more eaſy. But let it be obſerved, that the folly or knavery of ſuch men ariſes, not from their perſuaſion of their own free agency; for many millions of this perſuaſion have paſſed through life with a fair character; but from other cauſes. I cannot conceive any greater diſcouragement from knavery and folly, than the conſideration, that man is an accountable being; and I know not how we can ſuppoſe him

him accountable, unleſs we ſuppoſe him free. The obvious tendency of our principles is therefore to deter men from knavery and folly; whereas it is impoſſible for a Fataliſt to act upon his own principles for one day, without rendering himſelf ridiculous or deteſtable.

The reader, if diſpoſed to purſue theſe hints, and attend, in imagination, to the behaviour of the practical Fataliſt in the more intereſting ſcenes of public and private life, may entertain himſelf with a ſeries of adventures, more ludicrous, or at leaſt more irrational, than any of thoſe for which the knight of La Mancha is celebrated. I preſume I have ſaid enough to ſatisfy every impartial mind, "That the real and general "belief of neceſſity would be attended with "fatal conſequences to ſcience, and to hu"man nature;"—which is a repetition of the third remark we formerly made on the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of body *.

And now we have proved, that if there was any reaſon for rejecting BERKELEY's doctrine as abſurd, and contrary to common ſenſe, before his arguments were ſhown to ariſe from the abuſe of words, there is at preſent the ſame reaſon for rejecting the doctrine

* See the end of the preceding ſection.

trine of neceſſity, even on the ſuppoſition that it hath not as yet been logically confuted. Both doctrines are repugnant to the general belief of mankind: both, notwithſtanding all the efforts of the ſubtleſt ſophiſtry, are ſtill incredible: both are ſo contrary to nature, and to the condition of human beings, that they cannot be carried into practice; and ſo contrary to true philoſophy, that they cannot be admitted into ſcience, without bringing ſcepticiſm along with them, and rendering queſtionable the plaineſt principles of moral truth, and the very diſtinction between truth and falſehood. In a word, we have proved, that common ſenſe, as it teacheth us to believe and be aſſured of the exiſtence of matter, doth alſo teach us to believe and be aſſured, that man is a free agent.

It would lead us too far from our preſent purpoſe, to enter upon a logical examination of the argument for neceſſity. Our deſign is only to explain, by what marks one may diſtinguiſh the principles of common ſenſe, that is, intuitive or ſelf-evident notions, from thoſe deceitful and inveterate opinions that have ſometimes aſſumed the ſame appearance. If I have ſatisfied the reader, that the free agency of men is a ſelf-evident fact, I have alſo ſatisfied him, that all reaſoning on the ſide of neceſſity, though accounted unanſwerable,

ſwerable, is, in its very nature, and previouſly to all confutation, abſurd and irrational, and contrary to the practice and principles of all true philoſophers.

Let not the friends of liberty be diſcouraged by the perplexing arguments of the Fataliſt*. Arguments in oppoſition to ſelf-evident truth, muſt, if plauſible, be perplexing. Think what method of argumentation a man muſt purſue, who ſets himſelf to confute any axiom in geometry, or to argue againſt the exiſtence of a ſentiment, acknowledged and felt by all mankind. Indeed I cannot ſee how ſuch a perſon ſhould ever impoſe upon people of ſenſe, except by availing himſelf of expreſſions, which either are in themſelves ambiguous, or become ſo by his manner of applying them. If the ambiguity be diſcernable, the argument can

* There is no ſubject on which doubts and difficulties may not be ſtarted by ingenious and diſputatious men: and therefore, from the number of their objections, and the length of the controverſy to which they give occaſion, we cannot, in any caſe, conclude, that the original evidence is weak, or even that it is not obvious and ſtriking. Were we to preſume, that every principle is dubious againſt which ſpecious objections may be contrived, we ſhould be quickly led into univerſal ſcepticiſm. The two ways in which the ingenuity of ſpeculative men has been moſt commonly employed, are dogmatical aſſertions of doubtful opinions, and ſubtle cavils againſt certain truths.

Gerard's Diſſertations, ii. 4.

have no force; if there be no ſuſpicion of ambiguity, the diſpute may be continued from generation to generation, without working any change in the ſentiments of either party. When fact is diſregarded, when intuition goes for nothing, when no ſtandard of truth is acknowledged, and every unanſwered argument is deemed unanſwerable, true reaſoning is at an end; and the diſputant, having long ago loſt ſight of common ſenſe, is ſo far from regaining the path of truth, that, like Thomſon's peaſant bewildered in the ſnow, he continues "to wander "on, ſtill more and more aſtray." If any perſon will give himſelf the trouble to examine the whole controverſy concerning liberty and neceſſity, he will find, that the arguments on both ſides come at laſt to appear unanſwerable:— there is no common principle acknowledged by both parties, to which an appeal can be made, and each party charges the other with begging the queſtion. Is it not then better to reſt ſatisfied with the ſimple feeling of the underſtanding? I feel that it is in my power to will or not to will: all you can ſay about the influence of motives will never convince me of the contrary; or if I ſhould ſay that I am convinced by your arguments, my conduct muſt continually bely my profeſſion. One thing

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is undeniable: your words are obſcure, my feeling is not;—this is univerſally attended to, acknowledged, and acted upon; thoſe to the majority of mankind would be unintelligible, nay, perhaps they are in a great meaſure ſo even to yourſelves.

CHAP. III.

Recapitulation, and Inference.

THE ſubſtance of the preceding illuſtrations, when applied to the principal purpoſe of this diſcourſe, is as followeth:

Although it be certain, that all juſt reaſoning does ultimately terminate in the principles of common ſenſe; that is, in principles which muſt be admitted as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority, without evidence, or at leaſt without proof; even as all mathematical reaſoning does ultimately terminate in ſelf-evident axioms: yet philoſophers, eſpecially thoſe who have applied themſelves to the inveſtigation of the laws of human nature, have not always been careful to confine the reaſoning faculty within its proper ſphere, but have vainly imagined, that even the principles of common ſenſe are

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ſubject to the cogniſance of reaſon, and may be either confirmed or confuted by argument. They have accordingly, in many inſtances, carried their inveſtigations higher than the ultimate and ſelf-ſupported principles of common ſenſe; and by ſo doing have introduced many errors, and much falſe reaſoning, into the moral ſciences. To remedy this, it was propoſed, as a matter deſerving ſerious attention, to aſcertain the ſeparate provinces of reaſon and common ſenſe. And becauſe, in many caſes, it may be difficult to diſtinguiſh a principle of common ſenſe from an acquired prejudice; and, conſequently, to know at what point reaſoning ought to ſtop, and the authority of common ſenſe to be admitted as deciſive; it was therefore judged expedient to inquire, "Whether ſuch reaſonings as have been proſecuted beyond ultimate principles, be not marked with ſome peculiar characters, by which they may be diſtinguiſhed from legitimate inveſtigation." To illuſtrate this point, the doctrines of *the non-exiſtence of matter*, and *the neceſſity of human actions*, were pitched upon as examples; in which, at leaſt in the former of which, common ſenſe, in the opinion of all competent judges, is confeſſedly violated;—the natural effects produced upon the mind by the reaſonings that have been urged

urged in favour of theſe doctrines, were conſidered; —and the conſequences, reſulting from the admiſſion of ſuch reaſonings, were taken notice of, and explained. And it was found, that the reaſonings that have been urged in favour of theſe doctrines are really marked with ſome peculiar characters, which, it is preſumed, can belong to no legitimate argumentation whatſoever. Of theſe reaſonings it was obſerved, and proved, "That "the doctrines they are intended to eſtabliſh "are contradictory to the general belief of "all men in all ages;——That, though en"forced and ſupported with ſingular ſub"tlety, and though admitted by ſome pro"feſſed philoſophers, they do not produce "that conviction which ſound reaſoning "never fails to produce in the intelligent "mind;—and, laſtly, That really to believe, "and to act from a real belief of, ſuch doc"trines and reaſonings, muſt be attended "with fatal conſequences to ſcience, to vir"tue, to human ſociety, and to all the im"portant intereſts of mankind."

I do not ſuppoſe, that all the errors which have ariſen from not attending to the foundation of truth, and eſſential rules of reaſoning, as here explained, are equally dangerous. Some of them perhaps may be innocent; to ſuch the laſt of theſe characters cannot

cannot belong. If wholly innocent, it is of little conſequence, whether we know them to be errors or not. When a new tenet is advanced in moral ſcience, there will be a ſtrong preſumption againſt it, if contrary to univerſal opinion: for as every man may find the evidence of moral ſcience in his own breaſt, it is not to be ſuppoſed, that the generality of mankind would, for any length of time, perſiſt in an error, which their own daily experience, if attended to without prejudice, could not fail to rectify. Let, therefore, the evidence of the new tenet be carefully examined, and attended to. If it produce a full and clear conviction in the intelligent mind, and at the ſame time ſerve to explain the cauſes of the univerſality and long continuance of the old erroneous opinion, the new one ought certainly to be received as true. But if the aſſent produced by the new doctrine be vague, indefinite and unſatisfying; if nature and common ſenſe reclaim againſt it; if it recommend modes of thought that are inconceivable, or modes of action that are impracticable: it is not, it cannot be, true, however plauſible its evidence may appear.

Some will think, perhaps, that a ſtraighter and ſhorter courſe might have brought me ſooner, and with equal ſecurity, to this concluſion.

cluſion. I acknowledge I have taken a pretty wide circuit. This was owing in part to my love of perſpicuity, which in theſe ſubjects hath not always been ſtudied ſo much as it ought to have been; and partly, and chiefly, to my deſire of confuting, on this occaſion, (as I wiſh to have done with metaphyſical controverſy for ever), as many of the moſt pernicious tenets of modern ſcepticiſm as could be brought within my preſent plan. But the reader will perceive, that I have endeavoured to conduct all my digreſſions in ſuch a manner, as that they might ſerve for illuſtrations of the principal ſubject.

To teach men to diſtinguiſh by intuition a dictate of common ſenſe from an acquired prejudice, is a work which nature only can accompliſh. We ſhall ever be more or leſs ſagacious in this reſpect, according as Heaven has endowed us with greater or leſs ſtrength of mind, vivacity of perception, and ſolidity of judgment. The method here recommended is more laborious, and much leſs expeditious. Yet this method, if I am not greatly miſtaken, may be of conſiderable uſe, to enable us to form a proper eſtimate of thoſe reaſonings, which, by violating common ſenſe, tend to ſubvert every principle of rational belief, to ſap the foundations of truth and ſcience, and to leave the mind ex-

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poſed to all the horrors of ſcepticiſm. To be puzzled by ſuch reaſonings, is neither a crime nor a diſhonour; though in many caſes it may be both diſhonourable and criminal to ſuffer ourſelves to be deluded by them. For is not this to prefer the equivocal voice of a vain, ſelfiſh, and enſnaring wrangler, to the clear, the benevolent, the infallible dictates of nature? Is not this to bely our ſentiments, to violate our conſtitution, to ſin againſt our own ſoul? Is not this "to forſake the foun-" tains of living water, and to hew out un-" to ourſelves broken ciſterns that can hold " no water?"

PART

PART III.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THEY who conſider virtue as a ſubject of mere curioſity, and think that the principles of morals and properties of conic ſections ought to be explained with the ſame degree of apathy and indifference, will find abundant matter for cenſure in the preceding obſervations. As the author is not very ambitious of the good opinion of ſuch theoriſts, he will not give himſelf much trouble in multiplying apologies for what, to them, may have the appearance of keenneſs or ſeverity in the animadverſions he has hitherto made, or may hereafter make, on the principles of certain noted philoſophers. He conſiders happineſs as the end and aim of our being; and he thinks philoſophy valuable only ſo far as it may be conducive to this end. Human happineſs ſeemeth to him wholly unattainable, except by the means that virtue and religion provide. He is therefore perſuaded, that while employed in pleading the cauſe of virtue, and of true

ſcience,

ſcience, its beſt auxiliary, he ſupports, in ſome meaſure, the character of a friend to humankind; and he would think his right to that glorious appellation extremely queſtionable, if the warmth of his zeal did not bear ſome proportion to the importance of his cauſe. However ſuſpicious he may be of his ability to vindicate the rights of his fellow-creatures, he is not ſuſpicious of his inclination. He feels, that, on ſuch a ſubject, he muſt ſpeak from the heart, or not ſpeak at all.—For the genius and manner of his diſcourſe he has no other apology to offer: and by every perſon of ſpirit, candour, and benevolence, he is ſure that this apology will be deemed ſufficient.

As to the principles and matter of it, he is leſs confident. Theſe, though neither viſionary nor unimportant, may poſſibly be miſunderſtood. He therefore begs leave to urge a few things, for the further vindication and illuſtration of them. To his own mind they are fully ſatisfactory; he hopes to render them equally ſo to every candid reader. Happy! if he ſhould be as ſucceſsful in eſtabliſhing conviction, as others have been in ſubverting it.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Further remarks on the conſiſtency of theſe principles with the intereſts of Science, and the Rights of Mankind.

IT may poſſibly be objected to this diſcourſe, That "it tends to diſcourage "freedom of inquiry, and to promote im-"plicit faith."

But nothing is more contrary to my deſign; as thoſe who attend, without prejudice, to the full import of what I have advanced on the ſubject of evidence, will undoubtedly perceive. Let me be permitted to repeat, that the truths in which man is moſt concerned do not lie exceedingly deep; nor are we to eſtimate either their importance, or their certainty, by the length of the line of our inveſtigation. The evidences of the philoſophy of human nature are found in our own breaſt; we need not roam abroad in queſt of them; the unlearned are judges of them as well as the learned. Ambiguities have ariſen, when the feelings of the heart and underſtanding were expreſſed in words;

words; but the feelings themſelves were not ambiguous. Let a man attentively examine himſelf, with a ſincere purpoſe of diſcovering the truth, and without any bias in favour of particular theories, and he will ſeldom be at a loſs in regard to thoſe truths, at leaſt, that are moſt eſſential to his happineſs and duty. If men muſt needs amuſe themſelves with metaphyſical inveſtigation, let them apply it, where it can do no harm, to the diſtinctions and logomachies of ontology. In the ſcience of human nature it cannot poſſibly do good, but muſt of neceſſity do infinite miſchief. What avail the obſcure deductions of verbal argument, in illuſtrating what we ſufficiently know by experience? or in ſhowing that to be fictitious and falſe, whoſe energy we muſt feel and acknowledge every moment? When therefore I find a pretended principle of human nature evinced by a dark and intricate inveſtigation, I am tempted to ſuſpect, not without reaſon, that its evidence is no where to be found but in the arguments of the theoriſt; and theſe, when diſguiſed by quaint diſtinctions, and ambiguous language, it is ſometimes hard to confute, even when the heart recoils from the doctrine with contempt or deteſtation. If the doctrine be true, it muſt alſo be agreeable to experience: to experience, therefore, let the appeal be made;

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let the circumſtances be pointed out, in which the controverted ſentiment ariſes, or is ſuppoſed to ariſe. This is to act the philoſopher, not the metaphyſician; the interpreter of nature, not the builder of ſyſtems. But let us conſider the objection more particularly.

What then do you mean by that implicit faith, to which you ſuppoſe theſe principles too favourable? Do you mean an acquieſcence in the dictates of our own underſtanding, or in thoſe of others? If the former, I muſt tell you, that ſuch implicit faith is the only kind of belief which true philoſophy recommends. I have already remarked, that, while man continues in his preſent ſtate, our own intellectual feelings are, and muſt be, the ſtandard of truth to us. All evidence productive of belief, is reſolvable into the evidence of conſciouſneſs; and comes at laſt to this point, I believe becauſe I believe, or becauſe the law of my nature determines me to believe. This belief may be called implicit; but it is the only rational belief of which we are capable: and to ſay, that our minds ought not to ſubmit to it, is as abſurd as to ſay, that our bodies ought not to be nouriſhed with food. Revelation itſelf muſt be attended with evidence to ſatisfy conſciouſneſs or common ſenſe; otherwiſe it can never be rationally believed. By the evidence of the Goſpel, the

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rational Chriſtian is perſuaded that it comes from God. He acquieſces in it as truth, not becauſe it is recommended by others, but becauſe it ſatisfies his own underſtanding.

But if, by implicit faith, you mean, what I think is commonly meant by that term, an unwarrantable or unqueſtioned acquieſcence in the ſentiments of other men, I deny that any part of this diſcourſe hath a tendency to promote it. I never ſaid, that doctrines are to be taken for granted without examination; though I affirmed, that, in regard to moral doctrines, a long and intricate examination is neither neceſſary nor expedient. With moral truth, it is the buſineſs of every man to be acquainted; and therefore the Deity has made it level to every capacity.

Far be it from a lover of truth to diſcourage freedom of inquiry! Man is poſſeſſed of reaſoning powers; by means of which he may bring that within the ſphere of common ſenſe, which was originally beyond it. Of theſe powers he may, and ought to avail himſelf; for many important truths are not ſelf-evident, and our faculties were not deſigned for a ſtate of inactivity. But neither were they deſigned to be employed in fruitleſs or dangerous inveſtigation. Our knowledge and capacity are limited; it is fit and neceſſary they ſhould be ſo: we need not wander

wander into forbidden paths, or attempt to penetrate inacceſſible regions, in queſt of employment; the cultivation of uſeful and practical ſcience, the improvement of arts, and the indiſpenſable duties of life, will furniſh ample ſcope to all the exertions of human genius. Surely that man is my friend, who diſſuades me from attempting what I cannot perform, nor even attempt without danger. And is not he a friend to ſcience and mankind, who endeavours to diſcourage fallacious and unprofitable ſpeculation, and to propoſe a criterion by which it may be known and avoided?

But if reaſoning ought not to be carried beyond a certain boundary, and if it is the authority of common ſenſe that fixeth this boundary, and if it be poſſible to miſtake a prejudice for a principle of common ſenſe, how (it may be ſaid) are prejudices to be detected? At this rate, a man has nothing to do, but to call his prejudice a dictate of common ſenſe, and then it is eſtabliſhed in perfect ſecurity, beyond the reach of argument. Does not this furniſh a pretence for limiting the freedom of inquiry?—Having already ſaid a great deal in anſwer to the firſt part of this queſtion, I need not now ſay much in anſwer to the laſt. I ſhall only aſk, on the other hand, what method of

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reaſoning is the propereſt for overcoming the prejudices of an obſtinate man? Are we to wrangle with him *in infinitum*, without ever arriving at any fixed principle? That ſurely is not the way to illuſtrate truth, or rectify error. Do we mean to aſcertain the importance of our arguments by their number, and to pronounce that the better cauſe whoſe champion gives the laſt word? This, I fear, would not mend the matter. Suppoſe our antagoniſt ſhould deny a ſelf-evident truth, or refuſe his aſſent to an intuitive probability; muſt we not refer him to the common ſenſe of mankind? If we do not, we muſt either hold our peace, or have recourſe to ſophiſtry: for when a principle comes to be intuitively true or falſe, all legitimate reaſoning is at an end, and all further reaſoning impertinent. To the common ſenſe of mankind we muſt therefore refer him ſooner or latter; and if he continue obſtinate, we muſt leave him. Is it not then of conſequence to truth, and may it not ſerve to prevent many a ſophiſtical argument, and unprofitable logomachy, that we have it continually in view, that common ſenſe is the ſtandard of truth? a maxim, which men are not always diſpoſed to admit in its full latitude, and which, in the heat and hurry of diſpute, they are apt to overlook altogether.

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Some men will always be found, who think the muſt abſurd prejudices founded in common ſenſe. Reaſonable men never ſcruple to ſubmit their prejudices or principles to examination: but if that examination turn to no account, or if it turn to a bad account; if it only puzzle where it ought to convince, and darken what it ought to illuſtrate; if it recommend impracticable modes of action, or inconceivable modes of thought;—I muſt confeſs I cannot perceive the uſe of it. This is the only kind of reaſoning that I mean to diſcourage. It is this kind of reaſoning that has proved ſo fatal to the abſtract ſciences. In it all our ſceptical ſyſtems are founded; of it they conſiſt; and by it they are ſupported. Till the abſtract ſciences be cleared of this kind of reaſoning, they deſerve not the name of philoſophy: they may amuſe a weak and turbulent mind, and render it ſtill weaker and more turbulent; but they cannot convey any real inſtruction: they may undermine the foundations of virtue and ſcience; but they cannot illuſtrate a ſingle truth, nor eſtabliſh one principle of importance, nor improve the mind of man in any reſpect whatſoever.

By ſome it may be thought an objection to the principles of this eſſay, "That they ſeem "to recommend a method of confutation

" which is not ſtrictly according to logic, and " do actually contradict ſome of the eſta- " bliſhed laws of that ſcience."

It will readily be acknowledged, that many of the maxims of the ſchool-logic are founded in truth and nature, and have ſo long obtained univerſal approbation, that they are now become proverbial in philoſophy. Many of its rules and diſtinctions are extremely uſeful, not ſo much for ſtrengthening the judgment, as for enabling the diſputant quickly to comprehend, and perſpicuouſly to expreſs, in what the force or fallacy of an argument conſiſts. The groundwork of this ſcience, the Logic of Ariſtotle, if we may judge of the whole by the part now extant, is one of the moſt ſucceſsful and moſt extraordinary efforts of philoſophic genius that ever appeared in the world. And yet, if we conſider this ſcience, with regard to its deſign and conſequences, we ſhall perhaps ſee reaſon to think, that a ſtrict obſervance of its laws is not always neceſſary to the diſcovery of truth.

It was originally intended as a help to diſcourſe among a talkative and ſprightly people. The conſtitution of Athens made public ſpeaking of great importance, and almoſt a certain road to preferment or diſtinction. This was alſo in ſome meaſure the caſe

caſe at Rome; but the Romans were more reſerved, and did not, till about the time of Cicero, think of reducing converſation or public ſpeaking to rule. The vivacity of the Athenians, encouraged by their democratical ſpirit, made them fond of diſputes and declamations, which were often carried on without any view to diſcover truth, but merely to gratify humour, give employment to the tongue, and amuſe a vacant hour. Some of the dialogues of Plato are to be conſidered in this light, rather as exerciſes in declamation, than ſerious diſquiſitions in philoſophy. It is true, this is not the only merit even of ſuch of them as ſeem the leaſt conſiderable. If we are often diſſatisfied with his doctrine; if we have little curioſity to learn the characters and manners of that age, whereof he has given ſo natural a repreſentation; we muſt yet acknowledge, that as models for elegance and ſimplicity of compoſition, the moſt inconſiderable of Plato's dialogues are very uſeful and ingenious. His ſpeakers often compliment each other on the beauty of their ſtyle, even when there is nothing very ſtriking in the ſentiment *. If, therefore, we would form a juſt eſtimate of Plato,

* See the Sympoſium. Platonis opera, vol. 3. p. 198. Edit. Serran.

Plato, we muſt regard him not only as a philoſopher, but alſo as a rhetorician; for it is evident he was ambitious to excel in both characters. But it appears not to have been his opinion, that the practice of extemporary ſpeaking and diſputing, ſo frequent in his time, had any direct tendency to promote the inveſtigation of truth, or the acquiſition of wiſdom. The Lacedemonians, the moſt reſerved and moſt ſilent people in Greece, and who made the leaſt pretenſions to a literary character, were, in his judgment, a nation not only of the wiſeſt men, but of the greateſt philoſophers. Their words were few, their addreſs not without ruſticity; but the meaneſt of them was able, by a ſingle expreſſion, dextrouſly aimed, and ſeaſonably introduced, to make the ſtranger with whom he converſed appear no wiſer than a child *.

The Athenians, accuſtomed to reduce every thing to art, and among whom the ſpirit of ſcience was more prevalent than in any other nation ancient or modern, had contrived a kind of technical logic long before the days of

* Εἰ τὶς εἰθέλοι Λακεδαιμονίων τῷ φαυλώτατῳ συγγενέσθαι, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις εὑρήσει αὐτὸν φαῦλον τινα φαινόμενον, ἔστιτα ἔπεν ἂν τυχοι τῶν λεγομένων, εἰσβαλὼν ῥῆμα ἄξιον λόγου βραχὺ καὶ συνεστραμμένον, ὥσπερ δεινὸς ἀκοντιστὴς· ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον παιδὸς μηδὲν βέλτιον.

Socrates in Plat. Protogora, vol. 1. p. 342.

of Ariſtotle. Their ſophiſts taught it in conjunction with rhetoric and philoſophy. But Ariſtotle brought it to perfection, and ſeems to have been the firſt who profeſſedly diſjoined it from the other arts and ſciences. On his logic was founded that of the ſchoolmen. But they, like other commentators, often miſunderſtood the text, and often perverted it to the purpoſe of a favourite ſyſtem. They differed from one another in their notions of Ariſtotle's doctrine, ranged themſelves into ſects and parties; and, inſtead of explaining the principles of their maſter, made it their ſole buſineſs to comment upon one another. Now and then men of learning aroſe, who endeavoured to revive the true Peripatetic philoſophy; but their efforts, inſtead of proving ſucceſsful, ſerved only to provoke perſecution; and at length the ſcholaſtic ſyſtem grew ſo corrupt, and at the ſame time ſo enormous in magnitude, that it became an inſuperable incumbrance to the underſtandieg, and contributed not a little to perpetuate the ignorance and barbariſm of thoſe times. The chief aim of the old logic, even in its pureſt form, (ſo far at leaſt as it was a practical ſcience), was to render men expert in arguing readily on either ſide of any queſtion. But it is one thing to employ our faculties in ſearching after truth,

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and a very different thing to employ them equally in defence of truth and of error: and the ſame modification of intellect that fits a man for the one, will by no means qualify him for the other. Nay, if I miſtake not, the talents that fit us for diſcovering truth are rather hurt than improved by the practice of ſophiſtry. To argue againſt one's own conviction, muſt always have a bad effect on the heart, and render one more indifferent about the truth, and perhaps more incapable of perceiving it *.

To diſpute readily on either ſide of any queſtion, is admired by ſome as a very high accompliſhment: but it is what any perſon of moderate abilities may eaſily acquire by a little practice. Perhaps moderate abilities are the moſt favourable to the acquiſition of this talent. Senſibility and penetration, the inſeparable attendants, or rather the moſt eſſential parts, of true genius, qualify a man for diſcovering truth with little labour of inveſtigation; and at the ſame time intereſt him ſo deeply in it, that he cannot bear to turn his view to the other ſide of the queſtion. Thus he never employs

* See the ſtory of Pertinax in the Rambler, No. 95; where the effects of habitual diſputation, in perverting the judgment, and vitiating the heart, are illuſtrated with the utmoſt energy and elegance.

ploys himſelf in deviſing arguments; and, therefore, ſeldom arrives at any proficiency in that exerciſe. But the man of ſlow intellect and dull imagination advances ſtep by ſtep in his inquiries, without any keeneſs of ſentiment, or ardor of fancy, to diſtract his attention; and without that inſtantaneous anticipation of conſequences, that leads the man of genius to the concluſion, even before he has examined all the intermediate relations. Hence he naturally acquires a talent for minute obſervation, and for a patient examination of circumſtances; at the ſame time that his inſenſibility prevents his intereſting himſelf warmly on either ſide, and leaves him leiſure to attend equally to his own arguments, and to thoſe of the antagoniſt. This gives him eminent ſuperiority in a diſpute, and fits him, not indeed for diſcovering truth, but for baffling an adverſary, and ſupporting a ſyſtem.

I have been told, that Newton, the firſt time he read Euclid's Elements, perceived inſtantly, and almoſt intuitively, the truth of the ſeveral propoſitions, before he conſulted the proof. Such vivacity and ſtrength of judgment are extraordinary: and indeed, in the caſe of mathematical and phyſical truths, we are ſeldom to expect this inſtantaneous

ſtantaneous anticipation of conſequences, even from men of more than moderate talents. But in moral ſubjects, and in moſt of the matters that are debated in converſation, there is rarely any need of comparing a great number of intermediate relations: every perſon of ſound judgment ſees the truth at once: or, if he does not, it is owing to his ignorance of ſome facts or circumſtances, which may be ſoon learned from a plain narrative, but which are diſguiſed and confounded more and more by wrangling and contradiction. If there be no means of clearing the diſputed facts of difficulties, it would not, I preſume, be imprudent to drop the ſubject, and talk of ſomething elſe.

It is pleaſant enough to hear the habitual wrangler endeavouring to juſtify his conduct by a pretence of zeal for the truth. It is not the love of truth, but of victory, that engages him in diſputation. I have witneſſed many conteſts of this kind; but have ſeldom ſeen them lead, or even tend, to any uſeful diſcovery. Where oſtentation, ſelf-conceit, or love of paradox, are not concerned, they commonly ariſe from ſome verbal ambiguity, or from the miſconception of ſome fact, which both parties taking it for granted that they perfectly underſtand,

derſtand, are at no pains to aſcertain: and, when once begun, are, by the vanity or obſtinacy of the ſpeakers, or perhaps by their mere love of ſpeaking, continued, till accident put an end to them, by ſilencing the parties, rather than reconciling their opinions. I once ſaw a number of perſons, neither unlearned nor ill-bred, meet together to paſs a ſocial evening. As ill-luck would have it, a diſpute aroſe about the propriety of a certain *manœuvre* at *quadrille*, in which ſome of the company had been intereſted the night before. Two parties of diſputants were immediately formed; and the matter was warmly argued from ſix o'clock till midnight, when the company broke up. Being no adept in cards, I could not enter into the merits of the cauſe, nor take any part in the controverſy; but I obſerved, that each of the ſpeakers perſiſted to the laſt in the opinion he took up at the beginning, in which he ſeemed to be rather confirmed than ſtaggered by the arguments that had been urged in oppoſition.—With ſuch enormous waſte of time, with ſuch vile proſtitution of reaſon and ſpeech, with ſuch wanton indifference to the pleaſures of friendſhip, all diſputes are not attended; but moſt of them, if I miſtake not, will be found to be equally unprofitable.

I grant, that much of our knowledge is gathered from our intercourſe with one another;

ther; but I cannot think, that we are greatly indebted to the argumentative part of converſation; and nobody will ſay, that the moſt diſputatious companions are either the moſt agreeable or the moſt inſtructive. For my own part, I have always found thoſe to be the moſt delightful and moſt improving converſations, in which there was the leaſt contradiction; every perſon entertaining the utmoſt poſſible reſpect both for the judgment and for the veracity of his aſſociate; and none aſſuming any of thoſe dictatorial airs, which are ſo offenſive to the lovers of liberty, modeſty, and friendſhip.—If a catalogue were to be made of all the truths that have been diſcovered by wrangling in company, or by ſolemn diſputation in the ſchools, I believe it would appear, that the contending parties might have been employed as advantageouſly to mankind, and much more ſo to themſelves, in whipping a top, or brandiſhing a rattle.

The extravagant fondneſs of the Stoics for logical quibbles is one of the moſt diſagreeable peculiarities in the writings of that ſect. Every body muſt have been diſguſted with it in reading ſome paſſages of the converſations of Epictetus preſerved by Arrian; and muſt be ſatisfied, that it tended rather to weaken and bewilder, than to improve, the underſtanding. One could hardly believe to what ridi-

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culous exceſs they carried it. There was a famous problem among them called the *Pſeudomenos*, which was to this purpoſe. "When "a man ſays, *I lie*, does he lie, or does he "not? If he lies, he ſpeaks truth: if he "ſpeaks truth, he lies." Many were the books that their philoſophers wrote, in order to ſolve this wonderful problem. Chryſippus favoured the world with no fewer than ſix: and Philetas ſtudied himſelf to death in his attempts to ſolve it. Epictetus, whoſe good ſenſe often triumphs over the extravagance of Stoicism, juſtly ridicules this logical phrenzy*.

Socrates made little account of the ſubtleties of logic; being more ſolicitous to inſtruct others, than to diſtinguiſh himſelf†. He inferred his doctrine from the conceſſions of thoſe with whom he converſed; ſo that he left no room for diſpute, as the adverſary could not contradict him, without contradicting himſelf. And yet, to Socrates philoſophy is perhaps more indebted, than to any other perſon whatever.

We have therefore no reaſon to think, that truth is diſcoverable by thoſe means only which the technical logic preſcribes. Ariſtotle

* Arrian, lib. 2. cap. 17.

† Supra, part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 1.

ſtotle knew the theory both of ſophiſms and ſyllogiſms, better than any other man; yet Ariſtotle himſelf is ſometimes impoſed on by ſophiſms of his own invention *. And it is remarkable, that his moral, rhetorical, and political writings, in which his own excellent judgment is little warped by logical ſubtleties, are far the moſt uſeful, and, in point of ſound reaſoning, the moſt unexceptionable, part of his philoſophy.

The apparent tendency of the ſchool-logic is, to render men diſputatious and ſceptical, adepts in the knowledge of words, but inattentive to fact and experience. It makes them fonder of ſpeaking than thinking, and therefore ſtrangers to themſelves; ſolicitous chiefly about rules, names, and diſtinctions, and therefore leaves them neither leiſure nor inclination for the ſtudy of life and manners. In a word, it makes them more ambitious to diſtinguiſh themſelves as the partiſans of a dogmatiſt, than as inquirers after truth. It is eaſy to ſee how far a man of this temper is qualified to make diſcoveries in knowledge. To ſuch a man, indeed, the name of truth

* Thus he is ſaid to have proved the earth to be the centre of the univerſe by the following ſophiſm.—"Heavy bodies naturally tend to the centre of the univerſe; we know by experience, that heavy bodies tend to the centre of the earth; therefore the centre of the earth is the ſame with that of the univerſe."——Which is what the logicians call *petitio principii*, or *begging the queſtion*.

truth is only a pretence: he neither is, nor can be, much intereſted in the ſolidity or importance of his tenets; it is enough if he can render them plauſible; nay, it is enough if he can ſilence his adverſary by any means. The captious turn of an habitual wrangler deadens the underſtanding, ſours the temper, and hardens the heart: by rendering the mind ſuſpicious, and attentive to trifles, it weakens the ſagacity of inſtinct, and extinguiſhes the fire of imagination; it transforms converſation into a ſtate of warfare; and reſtrains thoſe lively ſallies of fancy, ſo effectual in promoting good-humour and good-will, which, though often erroneous, are a thouſand times more valuable than the dull correctneſs of a mood-and-figure diſciplinarian.

One of the firſt maxims of the ſchool-logic is, That nothing is to be believed, but what we can give a reaſon for believing; a maxim deſtructive of all truth and ſcience, as hath been fully ſhown in the former part of this diſcourſe. We muſt not, however, lay this maxim to the charge of the ancient logic. DES CARTES, and the modern ſceptics, got it from the ſchoolmen, who forged it out of ſome paſſages of Ariſtotle miſunderſtood. The philoſopher ſaid indeed, that all inveſtigation ſhould begin with doubt; but this doubt is to remain only till the underſtanding

ſtanding be convinced; which, in Ariſtotle's judgment, may be effected by intuitive evidence as well as by argumentative. The doctrine we have been endeavouring to illuſtrate, tends not to encourage any prejudices, or any opinions, unfriendly to truth or virtue: its only aim is, to eſtabliſh the authority of thoſe inſtinctive principles of conviction and aſſent, which the rational part of mankind have acknowledged in all ages, and which the condition of man, in reſpect both of action and intelligence, renders it abſurd not to acknowledge.—We cannot ſuppoſe, that the human mind, unlike to all other natural ſyſtems, is made up of incompatible principles; in it, as in all the reſt, there muſt be unity of deſign; and therefore the principles of human belief, and of human action, muſt have one and the ſame tendency. But many of our modern philoſophers teach a different doctrine; endeavouring to perſuade themſelves, and others, that they ought not to believe what they cannot poſſibly diſbelieve; and that thoſe actions may be abſurd, and contrary to truth, the performance of which is neceſſary to our very exiſtence. If they will have it, that this is philoſophy, I ſhall not diſpute about the word; but I inſiſt on it, that all ſuch philoſophy is no better than pedantic nonſenſe; and

and that, if a man were to write a book, to prove, that fire is the element in which we ought to live, he would not act more abſurdly, than ſome metaphyſicians of theſe times would be thought to have acted, if their works were underſtood, and rated according to their intrinſic merit.

That every thing may be made matter of diſpute, is another favourite maxim of the ſchool-logic; and it would not be eaſy to deviſe one more detrimental to true ſcience. What a ſtrange propenſity theſe doctors have had to diſputation! One would think, that, in their judgment, "the chief end of man is, "to contradict his neighbour, and wrangle "with him for ever." To attempt a proof of what I know to be falſe, and a confutation of what I know to be true, is an exerciſe from which I can never expect advantage ſo long as I deem rationality a bleſſing. I never heard it preſcribed as a recipe for ſtrengthening the ſight, to keep conſtantly blindfolded in the day-time, and put on ſpectacles when we go to ſleep; nor can I imagine how the ear of a muſician could be improved, by his playing frequently on an ill-tuned fiddle. And yet the ſchool-men ſeem to have thought, that the more we ſhut our eyes againſt the truth, we ſhall the more diſtinctly perceive it; and that the oftener we practiſe

practiſe falſhood, we ſhall be the more ſagacious in detecting, and the more hearty in abhorring it. To ſuppoſe, that we may make every thing matter of diſpute, is to ſuppoſe, that we can account for every thing. Alas! in moſt caſes, to feel and believe, is all we have to do, or can do. Deſtined for action rather than for knowledge, and governed more by inſtinct than by reaſon, we can extend our inveſtigations, eſpecially with regard to ourſelves, but a very little way. And, after all, when we acquieſce with implicit confidence in the dictates of our nature, where is the harm or the danger of ſuch a conduct? Is our life ſhortened, or health injured by it? No. Are our judgments perverted, or our hearts corrupted? No. Is our happineſs impaired, or the ſphere of our gratification contracted? Quite the contrary. Have we leſs leiſure for attending to the duties of life, and for adorning our minds with uſeful and elegant literature? We have evidently more time left for thoſe purpoſes. Why then ſo much logic? ſo many diſputes, and ſo many theories, about the firſt philoſophy? Rather than in diſguiſing falſehood, and labouring to ſubvert the foundations of truth, why do we not, with humility and candour, employ our faculties in the attainment of plain, practical, and uſeful knowledge?

The

The conſequences of ſubmitting every ſentiment and principle to the teſt of reaſoning, have been conſidered already. This practice has, in every age, tended much to confound ſcience, to prevent the detection of error, and (may we not add?) to debaſe the human underſtanding. For, have we not ſeen real genius, under the influence of a diſputatious ſpirit, derived, from nature, faſhion, or education, evaporate in ſubtlety, ſophiſtry, and vain refinement? Lucretius, Cicero, and Des Cartes, might be mentioned as examples. And it will be matter of laſting regret in the republic of letters, that a greater than the greateſt of theſe, I mean John Milton, had the misfortune to be born in an age when the ſtudy of ſcholaſtic theology was deemed an eſſential part of intellectual diſcipline.

It is either affectation, or falſe modeſty, that makes men ſay they know nothing with certainty. Man's knowledge, indeed, compared with that of ſuperior beings, may be very inconſiderable; and compared with that of The Supreme, is "as nothing and vanity:" and it is true, that we are daily puzzled in attempting to account for the moſt familiar appearances. But it is true, notwithſtanding, that we do know, and cannot poſ-

bly doubt of our knowing, ſome things with certainty. And

> " Let ſchool-taught pride diſſemble all it can,
> " Theſe little things are great to little man. ' *

To be vain of any attainment, is preſumption and folly: but to think every thing diſputable, is a proof of a weak mind and captious temper. And however ſceptics may boaſt of their modeſty, in diſclaiming all pretenſions to certain knowledge, I would appeal to the man of candour, whether they or we ſeem to poſſeſs leaſt of that virtue;—they, who ſuppoſe, that they can raiſe inſurmountable objections in every ſubject; or we, who believe, that our Maker has permitted us to know with certainty ſome few things?

In oppoſition to this practice of making every thing matter of diſpute, we have endeavoured to ſhow, that the inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of common ſenſe are the ultimate ſtandard of truth to man; that whatever contradicts them is contrary to fact, and therefore falſe; that to ſuppoſe them cogniſable by reaſon, is to ſuppoſe truth as variable as the intellectual, or as the argumentative, abilities of men; and that it is an abuſe of reaſon, and

* Goldſmith's Traveller.

and tends to the ſubverſion of ſcience, to call in queſtion the authenticity of our natural feelings, and of the natural ſuggeſtions of the human underſtanding.

That ſcience never proſpered while the old logic continued in faſhion, is undeniable. Lord Verulam was one of the firſt who brought it into diſrepute; and propoſed a different method of inveſtigating truth, namely, that the appearances of nature ſhould be carefully obſerved, and inſtead of facts being wreſted to make them fall in with theory, that theory ſhould be cautiouſly inferred from facts, and from them only. The event has fully proved, that our great philoſopher was in the right: for ſcience has made more progreſs ſince his time, and by his method, than for a thouſand years before. The court of Rome well knew the importance of the ſchool-logic in ſupporting their authority; they knew it could be employed more ſucceſsfully in diſguiſing error, than in vindicating truth: and Puffendorff ſcruples not to affirm, that they patroniſed it for this very reaſon *. Let it not then be urged, as an objection to this diſcourſe, that it recommends a method of confutation which is not ſtrictly logical. It is enough for me, that the method here recommended is agreeable

* De Monarchia Pontificis Romani, cap. 34.

to good ſenſe and ſound philoſophy, and to the general notions and practices of men.

CHAP. II.

The ſubject continued. Eſtimate of Metaphyſic. Cauſes of the Degeneracy of Moral Science.

THE reader has no doubt obſerved, that I have frequently uſed the term *metaphyſic*, as if it implied ſomething worthy of contempt or cenſure. That no lover of ſcience may be offended, I ſhall now account for this; by explaining the nature of that metaphyſic which I conceive to be repugnant to true philoſophy, though it has often aſſumed the name; and which, therefore, in my judgment, the friends of truth ought ſolicitouſly to guard againſt. This explanation will lead to ſome remarks that may perhaps throw additional light on the preſent ſubject.

Ariſtotle bequeathed by legacy his writings to Theophraſtus; who left them together with his own, to Neleus of Scepſis. The poſterity of Neleus, being illiterate men, kept them for ſome time locked up; but afterwards hearing, that the king of the country was making a general ſearch for books to furniſh

furniſh his library at Pergamus, they hid them in a hole under ground; where they lay for many years, and ſuffered much from worms and dampneſs. At laſt, however, they were ſold to one Apellicon, who cauſed them to be copied out; and, having (according to Strabo) a greater paſſion for books than for knowledge, ordered the tranſcribers to ſupply the chaſms from their own invention. When Sylla took Athens, he ſeized on Apellicon's library, and carried it to Rome. Here the books of Ariſtotle were reviſed, by Tyrannio the grammarian, and afterwards by Andronicus of Rhodes, a Peripatetic philoſopher, who publiſhed the firſt complete edition of them *. To fourteen of theſe books, which it ſeems had no general title, Andronicus prefixed the words, *Ta meta ta phyſica* †, that is, *the books poſterior to the phyſics*; either becauſe, in the order of the former arrangement, they happened to be placed, or becauſe the editor meant that they ſhould be ſtudied, next after the phyſics. This is ſaid to be the origin of the word *Metaphyſic*.

The ſubject of theſe fourteen books is miſcellaneous: yet the Peripatetics ſeem to have con-

* Strabo, p. 609. Paris edit. 1620. Plut. Sylla.

† Τὰ μετὰ τα φυσικα.

conſidered them as conſtituting but one branch of ſcience; the place of which in their ſyſtem may be thus conceived. All philoſophy is either ſpeculative or practical. The practical regulates the moral and intellectual operations of men, and therefore comprehends ethics and logic. The ſpeculative reſts in the knowledge of truth; and is divided into three parts, to wit, Phyſics, which inquire into the nature of material ſubſtances, and the human ſoul; Mathematics, which conſider certain properties of body as abſtracted from body; and this Metaphyſic, (which Ariſtotle is ſaid to have called *Theology*, and the *Firſt Philoſophy*), which, beſides ſome remarks on truth in general, the method of diſcovering it, and the errors of former philoſophers, explains, firſt, the general properties of being, and, ſecondly, the nature of things ſeparate from matter, namely, of God the one firſt cauſe, and of the forty-ſeven inferior deities.

Following the notion, that theſe fourteen books comprehend only one part of philoſophy, the Chriſtian Peripatetics divided metaphyſics into univerſal and particular. In the firſt, they treated of being, and its properties and parts, conſidered as it is being *; in the ſecond, of God and angels.

The

* Metaphyſique univerſelle—a laquelle il eſt traicté de l'eſtant

The ſchoolmen disjoined the philoſophy of the human mind from phyſics, where Ariſtotle had placed it; and added it to metaphyſics, becauſe its object is an immaterial ſubſtance. So that their metaphyſics conſiſted of three parts; Ontology, in which they pretended to explain the general properties of being; Pneumatics, which treated of the human mind; and Natural Theology, which treated of the Supreme Being, and of thoſe ſpirits which have either no body at all, or one ſo very fine as to be imperceptible to human ſenſe.

From the account we have given of the manner in which Ariſtotle's works were firſt publiſhed, the reader will admit, that ſome of the errors to be found in them may reaſonably enough be imputed to the firſt tranſcribers and editors. It was a groſs error in diſtribution, to reduce God, and the inferior deities, who were conceived to be a particular ſpecies of beings, to the ſame claſs with thoſe qualities or attributes that are common to all being, and to treat of both in the ſame part of philoſophy. It was no leſs improper than if a phyſiologiſt ſhould compoſe a treatiſe, "Of men, horſes, and identity." This in-

tant, et des ſes proprietez, et des parties ou membres de l'eſtant, ſelon qu'il eſt eſtant, &c. *Bouju.*

inaccuracy could not have eſcaped Ariſtotle: it is to be charged on his editors, who probably miſtook a ſeries of treatiſes on various ſubjects for one treatiſe on one particular ſubject. To many this may ſeem a trifling miſtake; but it has produced important conſequences. It led the earlier Peripatetics into the impropriety of explaining the divine exiſtence, and the general properties of being, by the ſame method of reaſoning; and it induced the ſchoolmen to confound the important ſciences of pneumatics and natural theology with the idle diſtinctions and logomachies of ontology. Natural theology ought to conſiſt of legitimate inferences from the effect to the cauſe; pneumatics, or the philoſophy of the human mind, are nothing but a detail of facts, illuſtrated, methodized, and applied to practice, by obvious and convincing reaſonings: both ſciences are founded in experience; but ontology pretends to aſcertain its principles by demonſtrations *a priori*. In fact, though ontology were, what it profeſſes to be, an explication of the general properties of being, it could not throw any light on natural theology and pneumatics; for in them the ontological method of reaſoning would be as improper as the mathematical. But the ſyſtems of ontology that have come into my hands

are

are little better than vocabularies of thoſe hard words which the ſchoolmen had contrived, in order to give an air of myſtery and importance to their doctrine. While, therefore, the ſciences of Natural Theology and Pneumatics were, by this prepoſterous diviſion, referred to the ſame part of philoſophy with ontology, how was it poſſible they could proſper, or be explained by their own proper evidence! In fact, they did not proſper: experience, their proper evidence, was laid aſide; and fictitious theory, diſguiſed by ontological terms and diſtinctions, and ſupported by ontological reaſoning, was ſubſtituted in its ſtead.

Locke was one of the firſt who reſcued the philoſophy of human nature out of the hands of the ſchoolmen, cleared it of the enormous incumbrance of ſtrange words which they had heaped upon it, and ſet the example of aſcertaining our internal operations, not by theory, but by experience. His ſucceſs was wonderful: for, though he has ſometimes fallen into the ſcholaſtic way of arguing, as in his firſt book; and ſometimes ſuffered himſelf to be impoſed on by words, as in his account of ſecondary qualities, too raſhly adapted from the Carteſians; yet has he done more to eſtabliſh the abſtract ſciences on a proper foundation, than could

could have been expected from one man who derived almoſt all his lights from himſelf. His ſucceſſors, Butler and Hutcheſon excepted, have not been very fortunate. BERKELEY's book, though written with a good deſign, did more harm than good, by recommending and exemplifying a method of argumentation ſubverſive of all knowledge, and leading directly to univerſal ſcepticiſm. Mr. HUME's *Treatiſe* and *Eſſays* are ſtill more exceptionable. This author has revived the ſcolaſtic way of reaſoning from theory, and of wreſting facts to make them coincide with it. His language is indeed more modiſh, but equally favourable to ſophiſtical argument, and equally proper for giving an air of plauſibility and importance to what is frivolous or unintelligible. What regard we are to pay to his profeſſion of arguing from experience has been already conſidered.

The word *metaphyſics*, according to vulgar uſe, is applied to all diſquiſitions concerning things immaterial. In this ſenſe, the plaineſt account of the faculties of the mind, and of the principles of morals and natural religion, would be termed *metaphyſics*. Such metaphyſics, however, we are ſo far from deſpiſing or cenſuring, that we account it the ſublimeſt and moſt uſeful part of ſcience.

Thoſe

Thoſe aguments alſo and illuſtrations in the abſtract philoſophy, which are not obvious to ordinary underſtandings, are ſometimes called *metaphyſical*. But as the principles of this philoſophy, however well expreſſed, appear ſomewhat abſtruſe to one who is but a novice in the ſtudy; and as very plain principles may ſeem intricate in an author who is inattentive to his expreſſion, as the beſt authors ſometimes are, it would be unfair to reject, or conceive a prejudice againſt, every doctrine in morals that is not perfectly free from obſcurity. Yet a continued obſcurity, in matters whereof every man ſhould be a competent judge, cannot fail to breed a ſuſpicion, either that the doctrine is faulty, or that the writer is not equal to his ſubject.

The term *metaphyſical*, in thoſe paſſages of this book where it is expreſſive of cenſure, will be found to allude to that mode of abſtract inveſtigation, ſo common among the modern ſceptics and the ſchoolmen, which is ſupported, either wholly by an ambiguous and indefinite phraſeology, or by that in conjunction with a partial experience; and which ſeldom fails to lead to ſuch concluſions as contradict matter of fact, or truths of indiſputable authority. It is this mode of inveſtigation that has introduced ſo many errors

rors into the moral ſciences; for few, even of our moſt candid moral philoſophers, are entirely free from it. The love of ſyſtem, or partiality to a favourite opinion, not only puts a man off his guard, ſo as to make him overlook inaccurate expreſſions, and indefinite notions, but may ſometimes occaſion even a miſtake of fact. When ſuch miſtakes are frequent, and affect the moſt important truths, we muſt blame the author for want of candour, or want of capacity: when they are innocent, and recur but ſeldom, we ought to aſcribe them to the imperfection of human nature.

Inſtances of this metaphyſic are ſo common, that we might almoſt fill a volume with a liſt of them. Spinoſa's pretended demonſtration of the exiſtence of the one great being, by which, however, he meant only the univerſe, is a metaphyſical argument, founded in a ſeries of falſe or unintelligible, though plauſible, definitions *. BERKELEY's proof of the non-exiſtence of matter is wholly metaphyſical; and ariſes chiefly from the miſtake of ſuppoſing certain words to have but one meaning, which really have two, and ſometimes three. The

* See the Appendix to vol. I. of Chev. Ramſay's Principles of Religion.

The ſame author, in a book of ſermons, ſaid to have been delivered at the chapel of Trinity College, Dublin *, has endeavoured to enforce the deteſtable doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, by metaphyſical arguments founded on an arbitrary explication of the term *moral duty*; from which he pretends to prove, that negative moral duties muſt never, on any account, be violated; and that paſſive obedience to ſupreme power, where-ever placed, is a negative moral duty. In this inquiry, he makes no account of thoſe inſtinctive ſentiments of morality whereof men are conſcious; aſcribing them to the blood and ſpirits, or to education and habit; and aſſerting, that the conduct of rational beings is to be directed, not by them, but by the dictates of ſober and impartial reaſon. LOCKE's diſcourſe againſt innate ideas and principles, is likewiſe too metaphyſical. Some of his notions on that ſubject are, I believe, right; but he has not explained them with his wonted preciſion; and moſt of his arguments are founded on an ambiguous acceptation of the words *idea* and *innate*.

The author of the *Fable of the Bees* ſeems to have carried this mode of reaſoning as far as it

* The third edition of theſe ſermons, which are three in number, is printed at London in the year 1713.

it will go. If there had been no ambiguous words in the Engliſh language, the underſtanding of mankind would never have been affronted with his ſyſtem. Many of our appetites become criminal only when exceſſive; and we have not always names to expreſs that degree of indulgence which is conſiſtent with virtue. The ſhameleſs word-catcher takes advantage of this, and confounds the innocent gratification with the exceſſive or criminal indulgence; calling both by the ſame name, and taking it for granted, that what he proves to be true of the one is alſo true of the other. What is it that may not be proved by this way of arguing? May not vice be proved to be virtue, and virtue to be vice? May not a regard to reputation, cleanlineſs, induſtry, generoſity, conjugal love, be proved to be the ſame with vanity, luxury, avarice, profuſion, ſenſuality? May it not be proved, that private virtues are private vices; and, conſequently, that private vices are public benefits? Such a concluſion is indeed ſo eaſily made out by ſuch logic, that nothing but ignorance, impudence, and a hard heart, is neceſſary to qualify a man for making it. If it be ſaid, that conſiderable genius muſt be employed in dreſſing up theſe abſurd doctrines, ſo as to render them plauſible; I would aſk, who are the

the perſons that think them plauſible? Never did I hear of one man of virtue or learning, who did not both deteſt and deſpiſe them. They ſeem plauſible, perhaps, to gamblers, highwaymen, and *petit maitres*; but it will not be pretended, that thoſe gentlemen have leiſure, inclination, or capacity, to reflect on what they read or hear, ſo as to ſeparate truth from falſehood.

Among metaphyſical writers, Mr. HUME holds a diſtinguiſhed place. Every part of philoſophy becomes metaphyſic in his hands. His whole theory of the underſtanding is founded on the doctrine of impreſſions and ideas, which, as he explains it, is ſo contrary to fact, that nothing but the illuſion of words could make it paſs upon any reader. I have already given ſeveral inſtances of this author's metaphyſical ſpirit. I ſhall give one more; which I beg leave to conſider at ſome length; that I may have an opportunity of confuting a very dangerous error, and, at the ſame time, of diſplaying more minutely, than by this general deſcription, the difference between metaphyſical and philoſophical inveſtigation.

Does any one imagine, that moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues,—that juſtice, genius, and bodily ſtrength, are virtues of the ſame kind; that they are contemplated with the

the ſame ſentiments, and known to be virtues by the ſame criterion? Few, I preſume, are of this opinion; but Mr. HUME has adopted it, and taken a great deal of pains to prove it. I ſhall demonſtrate, that this very important error has ariſen, either from inaccurate obſervation, or from his being impoſed on by words not well underſtood, or rather from both cauſes.

It is true, that juſtice, great genius, and bodily ſtrength, are all uſeful to the poſſeſſor and to ſociety; and all agreeable to, or (which in this author's ſtyle amounts to the ſame thing) approved by every one who conſiders or contemplates them. They therefore, at leaſt the two firſt, completely anſwer to our author's definition of virtue*. And it would be eaſy to write a great book, to ſhow the reaſons why moral, intellectual, and corporeal abilities, yield pleaſure to the beholder and poſſeſſor, and to trace out a number of analogies, real or verbal, ſubſiſting between them. But this is nothing to the purpoſe: they may reſemble in ten thouſand

* It is the nature, and indeed the definition, of virtue, "that it is a quality of the mind agreeable to, or approved "by, every one who conſiders or contemplates it." *Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 333. edit. 1767. Note.*

Bodily qualities are indeed excluded by this definition, but admitted by our author in his ſubſequent reaſonings.

ſand reſpects, and yet differ as widely, as a beaſt or ſtatue differs from a man. Let us trace the author's argument to its ſource.

Virtue is known by a certain agreeable feeling or ſentiment, ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of certain affections or qualities in ourſelves, or from the view of them in others. Granted. Juſtice, humanity, generoſity, excite approbation;—a handſome face excites approbation;—great genius excites approbation: the effect or ſentiment produced is the ſame in each inſtance: the object, or cauſe, muſt therefore, in each inſtance, be of the ſame kind. This is genuine metaphyſic: but before a man can be miſled by it, he muſt either find, on conſulting his experience, that the feeling excited by the contemplation of theſe objects is the ſame in each inſtance; in which caſe I would ſay, that his feelings are defective, or himſelf an inaccurate obſerver of nature:—or he muſt ſuppoſe, that the word *approbation*, becauſe written and pronounced the ſame way, does really mean the ſame thing in each of the three propoſitions above mentioned; in which caſe, I would ſay, that his judgment and ideas are confounded by the mere ſound and ſhape of a word. I am conſcious, that my approbation of a fine face is different in kind from my approbation of great genius;

and that both are extremely different from my approbation of juſtice, humanity, and generoſity: if I call theſe three different kinds of approbation by the ſame general name, I uſe that name in three different ſignifications. Therefore moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are not of the ſame, but of different kinds.

I confeſs, ſays our author, that theſe three virtues are contemplated with three different kinds of approbation. But the ſame thing is true of different moral virtues: piety excites one kind of approbation, juſtice another, and compaſſion a third; the virtues of Cato excite our eſteem, thoſe of Ceſar our love: if therefore piety, juſtice, and compaſſion, be virtues of the ſame kind, notwithſtanding that they excite different kinds of approbation, why ſhould juſtice, genius, and beauty, be accounted virtues of different kinds *? — This is another metaphyſical argument; an attempt to determine by words what facts only can determine. I ſtill inſiſt on fact and experience. My ſentiments, in regard to theſe virtues, are ſo diverſified, and in each variety ſo peculiar, that I know, and am aſſured that piety, juſtice, and humanity, are diſtinct individual virtues of the ſame kind; and

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 258. Hume's Eſſays, *ubi ſupra*.

and that piety, genius, and beauty, are virtues of different kinds. Applied to each of the former qualities, the word *virtue* means the ſame thing; but beauty is virtue in one ſenſe, genius in another, and piety in a third.

Well, if the ſentiments excited in you by the contemplation of theſe virtues, are ſo much diverſified, and in each variety ſo peculiar, you muſt be able to explain in what reſpect your approbation of intellectual virtue differs from your approbation of moral; which I preſume you will find no eaſy taſk. —It is not ſo difficult, Sir, as you ſeem to apprehend. When a man has acted generouſly or juſtly, I praiſe him, and think him worthy of praiſe and reward, for having done his duty; when ungenerouſly or unjuſtly, I blame him, and think him worthy of blame and puniſhment: but a man deſerves neither puniſhment nor blame for want of beauty or of underſtanding; nor reward nor praiſe for being handſome or ingenious.—But why are we thought worthy of blame and puniſhment for being unjuſt, and not for being homely, or void of underſtanding? The general conſcience of mankind would reply, Becauſe we have it in our power to be juſt, and ought to be ſo; but an idiot cannot help his want of underſtanding, nor an ugly man his want of beauty.

This our author will not allow to be a ſatisfactory anſwer; becauſe, ſays he, I have ſhown, that free-will has no place with regard to the actions, no more than the qualities of men *. What an immenſe metaphyſical labyrinth ſhould we have to run through if we were to diſintangle ourſelves out of this argument in the common courſe of logic! To ſhorten the controverſy, I muſt beg leave to affirm, in my turn, that our moral actions are in our own power, though beauty and genius are not; and to appeal, for proof of this affirmation, to the ſecond part of this Eſſay, or, rather, to the common ſenſe of mankind.

Again, "Moral diſtinctions," ſays Mr. HUME, "ariſe from the natural diſtinctions "of pain and pleaſure; and when we re- "ceive thoſe feelings from the general con- "ſideration of any quality or character, we "denominate it virtuous or vitious. Now "I believe no one will aſſert, that a quality "can never produce pleaſure or pain to the "perſon who conſiders it, unleſs it be per- "fectly voluntary in the perſon who poſſeſſes "it †."—More metaphyſic! and a ſophiſm too—a *petitio principii!* Here our author endeavours to confound intellectual with moral virtue, by an argument which ſuppoſeth his

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 260.
† Id. ibid.

his own theory of virtue to be true; of which theory this confuſion of the virtues is a neceſſary conſequence. The reader muſt ſee, that this argument, if it prove any thing at all, might be made to prove, that the ſmell or beauty of a roſe, the taſte of an apple, the hardneſs of ſteel, and the glittering of a diamond, as well as bodily ſtrength and great genius, are all virtues of the ſame kind with juſtice, generoſity, and gratitude. — Still we wander from the point. How often muſt it be repeated, that this matter is to be determined, not by metaphyſical arguments founded on ambiguous words, but by facts and experience!

"Have I not appealed to facts?" he will ſay. "Are not all the qualities that conſtitute the "great man, conſtancy, fortitude, magnanimity, as involuntary and neceſſary, as the "qualities of the judgment and imagination?"* The term *great man* is ſo very equivocal, that I will have nothing to do with it. The vileſt ſcoundrel on earth, if poſſeſſed of a title, immediately commences great man, when he has with impunity perpetrated any extraordinary act of wickedneſs; murthered fifty thouſand men; robbed all the houſes of half a dozen provinces; or dexterouſly plundered his own country, to defray the expence of a ruinous war,

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 259.

war, contrived on purpoſe to ſatiate his avarice, or divert the public attention from his blunders and villanies. I ſpeak of the qualities that conſtitute the *good man*, that is, of moral qualities; and theſe, I affirm, to be within every man's reach, though genius and beauty are not.

" But are not men afraid of paſſing for " good-natured, leſt that ſhould be taken for " want of underſtanding?— and do they not " often boaſt of more debauches than they " have been really engaged in, to give them- " ſelves airs of fire and ſpirit?*" Yes: fools do the firſt, to recommend themſelves to fools; and profligates the laſt, to recommend themſelves to profligates: but he is little acquainted with the human heart, who does not perceive, that ſuch ſentiments are affected, and contrary to the way of thinking that is moſt natural to mankind.

" But are you not as jealous of your cha- " racter, with regard to ſenſe and know- " ledge, as to honour and courage? †" This queſtion ought to be addreſſed to thoſe in whom courage is a virtue, and the want of it a vice: and I am certain, there is not in his Majeſty's ſervice one officer or private man, who would not wiſh to be thought rather a valiant

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.

† Id. ibid.

valiant ſoldier, though of no deep reach, than a very cleaver fellow, with the addition of an infamous coward.—The term *honour* is of dubious import. According to the notions of theſe times, a man may blaſpheme God, ſell his country, murder his friend, pick the pocket of his fellow-ſharper, and employ his whole life in ſeducing others to vice and perdition, and yet be accounted a man of honour: provided he be accuſtomed to ſpeak certain words, wear certain cloaths, and haunt certain company. If this be the honour alluded to by the author, an honeſt man may, for a very ſlender conſideration, renounce all pretenſions to it. But if he allude (as I rather ſuppoſe) to thoſe qualities of the heart and underſtanding which intitle one to general eſteem and confidence, Mr. HUME knows, that this kind of honour is dearer to a man than life.

"Well, then, temperance is a virtue in "every ſtation; yet would you not chuſe "to be convicted of drunkenneſs rather than "of ignorance?*"—I have heard of a witty parſon, who, having been diſmiſſed for irregularities, uſed afterwards, in converſation, to ſay, that he thanked God he was not caſhiered for ignorance and inſufficiency, but only

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.

only for vice and immorality. According to our author's doctrine, this ſpeech was neither abſurd nor profane: but I am ſure the generality of mankind would be of a different opinion. To be ignorant of what we ought to know, is to be deficient in moral virtue; to profeſs to know what we are ignorant of, is falſehood, a breach of moral virtue: whether theſe vices be more or leſs atrocious than intemperance, muſt be determined by the circumſtances of particular caſes. To be ignorant of what we could not know, of what we do not profeſs to know, and of what it is not our duty to know, is no vice at all: and a man muſt have made ſome progreſs in debauchery, before he can ſay, from ſerious conviction, I would rather be chargeable with intemperance, than with ignorance of this kind.—Theſe, and many of our author's miſtakes, muſt be imputed to want of knowledge of human nature: which I ſuppoſe is owing to his having confined his obſervation chiefly to the outſide of what is called faſhionable life, where the ſentiments publicly avowed are often different from what is inwardly felt, and extremely different from the truth and ſimplicity of nature.

It appears, then, that our author's reaſoning on the preſent ſubject, is not philoſophical,

cal, but what I call *metaphyſical* *; being founded, not on fact, but on theory, and ſupported by ambiguous words and inaccurate experience.

The judgment of the wiſer ancients in matters of morality, is doubtleſs of very great weight, but, in oppoſition to our own experience, can never preponderate; becauſe this is our ultimate ſtandard of truth. Mr. HUME endeavours to confirm his theory of virtue by authorities from the ancients, particularly the Stoics and Peripatetics. Though he had accompliſhed this, we might have appealed from their opinion, as well as from his, to our own feelings. But he fails in this, as in the other parts of his proof.

It is true, the Peripatetics and Stoics made Prudence the firſt (not the moſt important) of the cardinal virtues; becauſe they conceived it neceſſary to enable a man to act his part aright in life, and becauſe they thought it their duty to take every opportunity of improving their nature: but they never ſaid, that an incurable defect of underſtanding is a vice, or that it is as much our duty to be learned and ingenious, as to be honeſt and grateful.

* I do not contend, that this uſe of the word *metaphyſical* is ſtrictly proper: I mean nothing more, than to give the reader a notion of this particular mode of falſe reaſoning; and, by ſatisfying him that it is *not philoſophical*, to guard him againſt its influence.

grateful. "All the praiſe of virtue conſiſts "in action," ſays Cicero *, in name of the Stoics, when treating of this virtue of prudence. And, when explaining the comparative merit of the ſeveral claſſes of moral duty, he declares, that "All knowledge "which is not followed by action, is unpro-"fitable and imperfect, like a beginning "without an end, or a foundation without "a ſuperſtructure; and that the acquiſition "of the moſt ſublime and moſt important "ſcience ought to be, and will by every "good man be relinquiſhed, when it inter-"feres with the duties we owe our country, "our parents, and ſociety †." Wiſdom, indeed, he allows to be the firſt and moſt excellent of the virtues: but it is well known, that the Stoics made a diſtinction between Prudence and Wiſdom. By prudence they meant that virtue which regulates our deſires and averſions, and fixes them on proper objects. Wiſdom was another name for mental perfection: it comprehended all the virtues, the religious as well as the ſocial and prudential; and was equally incompatible with vice and with error ||. The wiſe man, the ſtandard of Stoical excellence, was, by their own acknowledgment, an ideal character;

* De officiis, lib. 1. cap. 6.
† Id. lib. 1. cap. 43, 44.
|| Id. ib.

racter; the pureſt virtue attainable in this life being neceſſarily tainted with imperfection. Hence ſome have endeavoured to turn their notions of wiſdom into ridicule; but I think, without reaſon. For is there any thing abſurd or ridiculous in an artiſt working after a model of ſuch perfection as he can never hope to equal? In the judgment of Ariſtotle and Bacon, the true poet forms his imitations of nature after a model of ideal perfection, which perhaps hath no exiſtence but in his own mind *. And are not Chriſtians commanded to imitate the Deity himſelf, that great original and ſtandard of perfection, between whom and the moſt excellent of his creatures an infinite diſtance muſt remain for ever †?

" The ancient moraliſts," ſays Mr. HUME, " made no material diſtinction among the " different ſpecies of mental endowments " and defects ‡." To every perſon who has read them, the contrary is well known. I might here fill many a page with quotations: but a few will ſuffice. " Man's virtue and vice," ſays Marcus Aurelius, " conſiſts not in thoſe " affections in which we are paſſive, but in " action.

* Ariſtot. Poetica. Bacon, De augmentis ſcientiarum, lib, 2.
† Matth. v. 48.
‡ Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 387, 388.

" action. To a ſtone thrown upward it is no " evil to fall, nor good to have mounted ‡." And in another place, " The vain-glorious " man placeth his good in the action of an- " other; the ſenſual, in his own paſſive feel- " ings; the wiſe man, in his own action ‖." " The contemplative life," ſays Plutarch, " when it fails to produce the active, is un- " profitable *." " To acquire knowledge," ſays Lucian, " is of no uſe, if we do not " alſo frame our lives according to ſome- " thing better †." It is remarkable, that the Greek tragedians (I know not by what authority, for Homer's idea is very different) repreſent Ulyſſes as a character more diſtinguiſhed for political prudence or cunning, than for ſtrict moral virtue; and often place him in ſuch attitudes as make him appear odious on this very account §. And Cicero, in

‡ Οὔθ' ἡ ἀρετὴ κ' κακια αὐτὴ ἐν πέισει ἄλλα ἐνεργία· τῷ ἀπαρίφθίντι λίθῳ οὐδὲν κακὸν τὸ κατενεχθῆναι, οὔδε ἀγαθὸν τὸ ἀνενεχθῆναι. *Lib.* 9. *c.* 17.

‖ Ὁ μὲν φιλόδοξος ἀλλοτρίαν ἐνέργειαν ἴδιον ἀγαθὸν ὑπολαμβάνει· ὁ δὲ φιλήδονος, ἰδίαν πᾶσιν· ὁ δὲ νοῦν, ἔχων, ἰδίαν πρᾶξιν. *Lib.* 6. *c.* 51.

* Ὁ δὲ θεωρητικὸς βίος τῆ πρακτικῆ διαμαρτάνων, ἀνωφελὴς. *Plutarch. de Educatione.*

† Οὐδὲν ὄφελος ἦν ἐπίστασθαι τὰ μαθήματα, εἰ μὴ τὶς ἄρα κ' τὸν βίον ρυθμίζει πρὸς τὸ βελτίον. *Lucian. Conviv.*

§ See particularly Sophocles. Philoct. verſ. 100. and verſ. 1260. I beg leave to quote a few very remarkable lines. Neoptolemus having, by the advice of Ulyſſes, fraudulently got

in his Treatiſe of Moral Duties, often declares, that cunning, when it violates the rules of juſtice, is criminal and deteſtable. Does Virgil conſign cripples and idiots, as well as tyrants, to Tartarus? Does he ſay, that a great memory, and handſome face, as well as a pure heart, were the paſſports to Elyſium?

got poſſeſſion of the arrows of Philoctetes, repents of what he had done, and is going to reſtore them. To deter him from his purpoſe, Ulyſſes threatens him with the reſentment of the whole Grecian army.

Neop. Σοφὸς πεφυκὼς οὐδὲν ἐξανδᾷς σοφόν.
Ulyſ. Σὺ δ' οὔτε φωνεῖς, οὔτε δρασείεις σοφόν.
Neop. Ἀλλ' εἰ δίκαια, τῶν σοφῶν κρίσσω τάδε.
Ulyſ. Καί πῶς δίκαιον, ἅ γ' ἴλαβες βουλαῖς ἐμαῖς
Παλὶν μεθεῖναι ταῦτα; *Neop.* Τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
Αἰσχρὰν ἁμαρτὼν, ἀναλαβεῖν πειράσομαι.
Ulyſ. Στράτον δ' Ἀχαιῶν ὦ φοβῇ πράσσων τάδε;
Neop. Ξὺν τῷ δικαίῳ τὸν σὸν οὐ ταρβῶ φόβον. *verſ.* 1279.

—— *Neop.* Wiſe as thou art, Ulyſſes,
Thou talk'ſt moſt idly. *Ulyſ.* Wiſdom is not thine,
Either in word or deed. *Neop.* Know, *to be juſt*
Is better far than to be wiſe. *Ulyſ.* But where,
Where is the juſtice, thus unauthoris'd,
To give a treaſure back thou oweſt to me,
And to my counſels? *Neop.* I have done a wrong,
And I will try to make atonement for it.
Ulyſ. Doſt thou not fear the power of Greece? *Neop.* I fear
Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.
Franklin.

Throughout the whole play, the fire and generoſity of the young hero (ſo well becoming the ſon of Achilles) is finely oppoſed to the caution and craft of the politician, and forms one of the moſt ſtriking contraſts that can well be imagined.

ſium? No. Virgil was too good a man to injure the cauſe of virtue, and too wiſe to ſhock common ſenſe, by ſo prepoſterous a diſtribution of reward and puniſhment. The impious, the unnatural, the fraudulent, the avaricious; adulterers, inceſtuous perſons, traitors, corrupt judges, venal ſtateſmen, tyrants, and the minions of tyrants, are thoſe whom he dooms to eternal miſery: and he peoples Elyſium with the ſhades of the pure and the pious, of heroes who have died in defence of their country, of ingenious men who have employed their talents in recommending piety and virtue, and of all who by acts of beneficence have merited the love and gratitude of their fellow-creatures *.

The

* Virgil. Æneid. vi. 547. — 665. — As the moral ſentiments of nations may often be learned from their fables and traditions, as well as from their hiſtory and philoſophy, it will not perhaps be deemed foreign from our deſign, to give the following brief abſtract of this poet's ſublime theory of future rewards and puniſhments; the outlines of which he is known to have taken from the Pythagoreans and Platoniſts, who probably were indebted for them to ſome ancient tradition.

The ſhades below are divided by Virgil into three diſtricts or provinces. On this ſide Styx, the ſouls of thoſe whoſe bodies have not been honoured with the rites of ſepulture, wander about in a melancholy condition for a hundred years, before they are permitted to paſs the river. When this period expires, or when their bodies are buried, they are ferried over, and appear before Minos and the other judges, who allot them ſuch a manſion as their lives on earth are found to have deſerved.

The Peripatetics held prudence to be an active principle diffuſed through the whole of

ſerved. They, who have been of little or no uſe to mankind; or who have not been guilty of any very atrocious crimes; or whoſe crimes, though atrocious, were the effects rather of an unhappy deſtiny, than of wilful depravation, are diſpoſed of in different parts of the *regions of mourning*, (lugentes campi), where they undergo a variety of purifying pains. From thence, when thoroughly refined from all the remains of vice, they paſs into Elyſium, where they live a thouſand years in a ſtate of happineſs; and then, after taking a draught of the waters of oblivion, are ſent back to earth to animate new bodies.—Thoſe who have been guilty of great crimes, as impiety, want of natural affection, adultery, inceſt, breach of truſt, ſubverting the liberties of their country, &c. are delivered by the judge Rhadamanthus to Tiſiphone and the other furies, who ſhut them up in an immenſe dungeon of darkneſs and fire, called *Tartarus*, where their torments are unſpeakable and eternal.—The ſouls of good men are re-united, either with the Deity himſelf, or with that univerſal ſpirit which he created in the beginning, and which animates the world; and their ſhades, ghoſts, or *idola*, enjoy for ever the repoſe and pleaſures of Elyſium. Theſe ſhades might be ſeen, though not touched; they reſembled the bodies with which they had formerly been inveſted; and retained a conſciouſneſs of their identity, and a remembrance of their paſt life, with almoſt the ſame affections and character that had diſtinguiſhed them on earth.

On this ſyſtem, Virgil has founded a ſeries of the ſublimeſt deſcriptions that are to be met with in poetry. Milton alone has equalled them in the firſt and ſecond books of Paradiſe Loſt. Homer's *Necyomanteia*, in the eleventh of the Odyſſey, has the merit of being original: but Virgil's imitation is confeſſedly far ſuperior. The dream of Henry, in the ſeventh canto of the Henriade, notwithſtanding the advantages that the author might have drawn from the Chriſtian theology, is but a trifle, compared with the magnificent and ſtupendous ſcenery exhibited in the ſixth book of the Æneid.

This

of moral virtue *. "None but a good "man," ſays Ariſtotle, "can be prudent;" —and, a little after, "It is not poſſible for "a man to be properly good without pru- "dence, nor prudent without moral vir- "tue†." Will it yet be ſaid, that the ancient moraliſts made no material diſtinction between moral and intellectual virtues? Is it not evident, that though they conſidered both as neceſſary to the formation of a perfect character, and ſometimes diſcourſed of both

This theory of future rewards and puniſhments, however imperfect, is conſonant enough with the hopes and fears of men, and their natural notions of virtue and vice, to render the poet's narrative alarming and intereſting in a very high degree. But were an author to adopt Mr. HUME's theory of virtue and the ſoul, and endeavour to ſet it off in a poetical deſcription, all the powers of human genius could not ſave it from being ridiculous. A metaphyſician may "blunder" for a long time, "round about a meaning," without giving any violent ſhock to an inattentive reader: but a poet, who clothes his thoughts with imagery, and illuſtrates them by examples, muſt come to the point at once; and, if he means to pleaſe and not diſguſt his readers, to move their admiration and not their contempt, muſt be careful not to contradict their natural notions, eſpecially in matters of ſuch deep and univerſal concern as morality and religion.

* — Ἀναγκη τὴν φρονησιν ἕξιν εἶναι.—πρακτικὴν.

Ethic. ad Nicom. vi. 5.

† Ἀδύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα ἀγαθόν. — Οὐχ' οἷον ἀγαθὸν εἶναι κυρίως ἄνευ φρονήσεως· οὐδὲ φρόνιμον, ἄνευ τῆς ἠθικῆς ἀρετῆς.

Id. vi. 13.

See the elegant paraphraſe of Andronicus the Rhodian, upon theſe paſſages.

both in the ſame treatiſe or ſyſtem, yet they deemed the latter valuable only as means to qualify us for the former, and inſignificant, or even odious, when they failed to anſwer this end?

"We may," ſays Mr. HUME, "by perуſing the titles of the chapters in Ariſtotle's Ethics, be convinced, that he ranks "courage, temperance, magnificence, magnanimity, modeſty, prudence, and a *manly* "*freedom*, among the virtues, as well as juſtice and friendſhip *." True; but if our learned metaphyſician had extended his reſearches a little beyond the *titles* of thoſe chapters, he would have found, that, in Ariſtotle's judgment, "Moral virtue is a voluntary diſpoſition or habit; and that moral "approbation and diſapprobation are excited by thoſe actions and affections only "which are in our own power, that is, of "which the firſt motion ariſes in ourſelves, "and proceeds from no extrinſic cauſe †."

* Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 388.—The term *manly freedom* does not expreſs the meaning of the Greek ἐλευθεριότης. Mr. HUME was perhaps miſled by the etymology: but he ought to have known, that by this word the philoſopher denotes *that virtue which conſiſts in the moderate uſe of wealth.* —— περὶ χρήματα μεσότης. See Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 4. cap. 1, 2.

† Ethic. ad Nicom. iii. 1. — ii. 6. Mag. Mor. i. 15. Andronicus Rhodius, p. 89, 90. 188. edit. Cantab. 1679. Stephanus, in voce προαιρέτικός.

This is true philoſophy: it is accurate, perſpicuous, and juſt, and very properly determines the degree of merit of our intellectual and conſtitutional virtues. A man makes proficiency in knowledge:—if in this he has acted from a deſire to improve his nature, and qualify himſelf for moral virtue, that deſire, and the action conſequent upon it, are virtuous, laudable, and of good deſert. Is a man poſſeſſed of great genius? — this inveſts him with dignity and diſtinction, and qualifies him for noble undertakings: but this of itſelf is no moral virtue; becauſe it is not a diſpoſition reſulting from a ſpontaneous effort. Is his conſtitution naturally diſpoſed to virtue? — he ſtill has it in his power to be vitious, and therefore his virtue is truly meritorious; though not ſo highly as that of another man who, in ſpite of outrageous appetites, and tempting circumſtances, hath attained an equal degree of moral improvement. A man conſtitutionally brave, generous, or grateful, commands our admiration more than another, who ſtruggles to overcome the natural baſeneſs of his temper. The former is a ſublimer object, and may be of greater ſervice to ſociety; and as his virtue is ſecured by conſtitution as well as by inclination, we repoſe in it without fear of being diſappointed. Yet perhaps the latter, if his merit

merit were equally conſpicuous, would be found equally worthy of our moral approbation. Indeed, if his virtue be ſo irreſolute, as to leave him wavering between good and evil, he is not intitled to praiſe: ſuch irreſolution is criminal, becauſe he may and ought to correct it; we can not, and we ought not to truſt him, till we ſee a ſtrong prepoſſeſſion eſtabliſhed in favour of virtue.—However, let us love virtue where-ever we find it: whether the immediate gift of Heaven, or the effect of human induſtry co-operating with divine influence, it always deſerves our eſteem and veneration.

The reader may now form an eſtimate of that author's attention, who ſays, that "the "ancient moraliſts made no material diſtinc-"tion among the different ſpecies of men-"tal endowments and defects." If any one is diſpoſed to think, that I have made out my point, rather by inference than by direct proof, I ſubmit to his conſideration the following paſſages, which are too plain to need a commentary.

Having propoſed a general diſtribution of our mental powers, (which ſeems to amount to this, that ſome of them fit us for knowledge, and others for action), Ariſtotle proceeds in this manner. "According to this "diſtribution, virtue is alſo divided in-

"to

" to intellectual and moral. Of the former " kind are wiſdom, intelligence, and pru- " dence; of the latter, temperance, and " frugal liberality. When we ſpeak of mo- " rals, we do not ſay, that a man is wiſe or " intelligent, but that he is gentle or tempe- " rate. Yet we praiſe a wiſe man in re- " ſpect of his diſpoſitions [or habits]; for " laudable diſpoſitions are what we call vir- " tues *."

" The virtues of the ſoul," ſays Cicero, " and of its principal part the underſtand- " ing, are various, but may be reduced to " two kinds. The firſt are thoſe which " nature has implanted, and which are " called *not voluntary*. The ſecond kind are " more properly called *virtues*, becauſe they " depend on the will; and theſe, as objects " of approbation, are tranſcendently ſupe- " rior. Of the former kind are docility, " memory, and all the virtues diſtinguiſh- " ed by the general name of genius, or ca- " pacity: perſons poſſeſſed of them are cal- " led

* Διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρέτη κατὰ τὴν διαφόραν. τούτων. λέγομεν γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς μὲν διανοητικάς, τὰς δὲ ἠθικας. σοφίαν μὲν, καὶ σύνεσιν, καὶ φρονήσιν, διανοητίκας· ἐλευθεριότητα δὲ καὶ σωφροσυνην, ἤθικας. λέγοντες γὰρ περὶ τῦ ἤθους, οὐ λέγομεν ὅτι σόφος, ἢ σύνετος, ἀλλ' ὅτι πραος ἢ σώφρων. ἐπαινῦμεν δὲ καὶ τὸν σοφὸν τὴν ἕξιν, τῶν ἐξεων δὲ τὰς ἐπαινέτας ἀρέτας λέγομεν.

Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 1. *ſub. fin.*

" led ingenious. The latter claſs compre-
" hends *the great and genuine virtues*, which
" we denominate *voluntary*, as prudence,
" temperance, fortitude, juſtice, and others
" of the ſame kind*."

The word *virtue* has indeed great latitude of ſignification. It denotes any quality of a thing tending to the happineſs of a percipient being; it denotes that quality, or perfection of qualities, by which a thing is fitted to anſwer its end; ſometimes it denotes power or agency in general; and ſometimes any habit which improves the faculties of the human mind. In the firſt three ſenſes we aſcribe virtue to the ſoul, and to the body, to brutes, and inanimate things; in the laſt, to our intellectual as well as moral nature. And no doubt inſtances may be found of am-

* Animi autem, et ejus animi partis quæ princeps eſt, quæque mens nominatur, plures ſunt virtutes, ſed duo prima genera: unum earum quæ ingenerantur ſuapte natura, appellanturque non voluntariæ: alterum autem earum, quæ in voluntate poſitæ, magis proprie eo nomine appellari ſolent; quarum eſt excellens in animorum laude præſtantia. Prioris generis eſt docilitas, memoria; qualia fere omnia appellantur uno ingenii nomine; eaſque virtutes qui habent ingenioſi vocantur. Alterum autem genus eſt *magnarum verarumque virtutum*, quas appellamus voluntarias, ut prudentiam, temperantiam, fortitudinem, juſtitiam, et reliquas ejuſdem generis.——Virtutes voluntariæ proprie virtutes appellantur, multumque excellunt, &c.

Cicero De Finibus, lib. 5. cap. 13. ex editione Daviſii.

ambiguity and want of preciſion, even in the beſt moraliſts, from an improper uſe of this word. Yet I believe this attempt of Mr. HUME's is the firſt that has been made to prove, that among theſe very different ſorts of virtue there is little or no difference. Our author ſeems indeed to have a ſingular averſion to that kind of curioſity, which, not ſatisfied with knowing the names, is induſtrious to diſcover the natures of things. When he finds two or three different things called by the ſame name, he will rather write fifty pages of metaphyſic to prove that they are the ſame, than give himſelf the trouble to examine them ſo as to ſee what they really are*. Is it not ſtrange, that a man of ſcience ſhould ever have taken it in his head, that the characteriſtic of a genus is a ſufficient deſcription of a ſpecies? He might as well have ſuppoſed, that, becauſe perception and ſelf-motion belong to animal life in general, it is therefore a ſufficient definition of man, to call him a ſelf-moving and percipient creature: from which profound principle it clearly follows, that man is a beaſt, and that a beaſt is a man.

By

* See another remarkable inſtance, Part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 1. of this Eſſay.

By ſuch reaſoning as Mr. HUME has uſed on the preſent occaſion, it would be eaſy to prove any doctrine. The method is this:—and I hope thoſe who may hereafter chuſe to aſtoniſh the world with a ſyſtem of metaphyſical paradoxes, will do me the honour and the juſtice to acknowledge, that I was the firſt who unfolded the whole art and myſtery of that branch of manufacture within the compaſs of one ſhort RECIPE:—Take a word (an abſtract term is the moſt convenient) which admits of more than one ſignification; and, by the help of a predicate and copula, form a propoſition, ſuitable to your ſyſtem, or to your humour, or to any other thing your pleaſe, except truth. When laying down your premiſes, you are to uſe the name of the quality or ſubject, in one ſenſe; and, when inferring your concluſion, in another. You are then to urge a few equivocal facts, very ſlightly examined, (the more ſlightly the better), as a further proof of the ſaid concluſion; and to ſhut up all with citing ſome ancient authorities, either real or fictitious, as may beſt ſuit your purpoſe. A few occaſional ſtrictures on religion as an unphiloſophical thing, and a ſneer at the *Whole Duty of Man* *, or any other good book,

* See Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 388. edit. 1767.

book, will give your diſſertation what many are pleaſed to call a *liberal turn*; and will go near to convince the world, that you are a candid philoſopher, a manly free-thinker, and a very fine writer.

It is to no purpoſe that our author calls this a verbal diſpute, and ſometimes condeſcends to ſoften matters by an *almoſt*, or ſome ſuch evaſive word. His doctrine obviouſly tends to confound all our ideas of virtue and duty, and to make us conſider ourſelves as mere machines, acted upon by external and irreſiſtible impulſe, and not more accountable for moral blemiſhes, than for ignorance, want of underſtanding, poverty, deformity, and diſeaſe. If the reader think as ſeriouſly of the controverſy as I do, he will pardon the length of this digreſſion.

I hope it now appears, that there is a kind of metaphyſic, which, whatever reſpectable names it may have aſſumed, deſerves contempt or cenſure from every lover of truth. If it be detrimental to ſcience, it is equally ſo to the affairs of life. Whenever one enters on buſineſs, the metaphyſical ſpirit muſt be laid aſide, otherwiſe it will render him ridiculous, perhaps deteſtable. Sure it will not be ſaid, that any portion of this ſpirit is neceſſary to form a man for ſtations of high importance. For theſe, a turn to metaphyſic

taphyſic would be as effectual a diſqualification as want of underſtanding. The metaphyſician is cold, wavering, diſtruſtful, and perpetually ruminates on words, diſtinctions, arguments, and ſyſtems. He attends to the events of life with a view chiefly to the ſyſtem that happens for the time to predominate in his imagination, and to which he is anxious to reconcile every appearance. His obſervation is therefore partial and inaccurate, becauſe he contemplates nature through the medium of his favourite theory, which is always falſe; ſo that experience, which enlarges, aſcertains, and methodiſes, the knowledge of other men, ſerves only to heighten the natural darkneſs and confuſion of his. His literary ſtudies are conducted with the ſame ſpirit, and produce the ſame effects.——Whereas, to the adminiſtration of great affairs, truth and ſteadineſs of principle, conſtancy of mind, intuitive ſagacity, extreme quickneſs in apprehending the preſent and anticipating the future, are indiſpenſably neceſſary. Whatever tends to weaken and unſettle the mind, to cramp the imagination, to fix the attention on minute and trifling objects, and withdraw it from thoſe enlarged proſpects of nature and mankind, in which true genius loves to expatiate; whatever has this tendency, and

ſurely

ſurely metaphyſic has it, is the bane of genius, and of every thing that is great in human nature.

In the lower walks of life, our theoriſt will be oftener the object of ridicule than of deteſtation. Yet even here, the man is to be pitied, who, in matters of moment, happens to be connected with a ſtanch metaphyſician. Doubts, diſputes, and conjectures, will be the plague of his life. If his aſſociate form a ſyſtem of action or inaction, of doubt or confidence, he will ſtick by it, however abſurd, as long as he has one verbal argument unanſwered to urge in defence of it. In accounting for the conduct of others, he will reject obvious cauſes, and ſet himſelf to explore ſuch as are more remote and refined. Making no proper allowance for the endleſs variety of human character, he will ſuppoſe all men influenced, like himſelf, by ſyſtem and verbal argument: certain cauſes, in his judgment, muſt of neceſſity produce certain effects; for he has twenty reaſons ready to offer, by which it is demonſtrable, that they cannot fail: and it is well, if experience at laſt convince him, that there was a ſmall verbal ambiguity in his principles, and that his views of mankind were not quite ſo extenſive as they ought to have been. In a word, unleſs he be very good-natured, and of a paſſive

five diſpoſition, his refinements will do more harm than even the ſtiff ſtupidity of an idiot. If inclined to fraud, or any ſort of vice, he will never be at a loſs for an evaſion; which, if it ſhould not ſatisfy his aſſociate, will perplex and plague him moſt effectually. I need not enlarge; the reader may conceive the reſt. To aid his fancy, he will find ſome traits of this character, in one of its moſt amuſing and leaſt diſagreeable forms, delineated with a maſterly pencil in the perſon of Walter Shandy, Eſquire.

It is aſtoniſhing to conſider, how little mankind value the good within their reach, and how ardently they purſue what nature has placed beyond it; how blindly they over-rate what they have no experience of, and how fondly they admire what they do not underſtand. This verbal metaphyſic has been dignified with the name of *ſcience*, and verbal metaphyſicians have been reputed philoſophers, and men of genius. Doubtleſs a man of genius may, by the faſhion of the times, be ſeduced into theſe ſtudies: but that particular caſt of mind which fits a man for them, and recommends them to his choice, is not genius, but a minute and feeble underſtanding; capable indeed of being made, by long practice, expert in the management of words; but which never did,

did, and never will, qualify any man for the diſcovery or illuſtration of ſentiment. For what is genius? What, but ſound judgment, ſenſibility of heart, and a talent for accurate and extenſive obſervation? And will ſound judgment prepare a man for being impoſed on by words? will ſenſibility of heart render him inſenſible to his own feelings, and inattentive to thoſe of other men? will a talent for accurate and extenſive obſervation, make him ignorant of the real phenomena of nature, and, conſequently, incapable of detecting what is falſe or equivocal in the repreſentation of facts? And yet, when facts are fairly and fully repreſented; when human ſentiments are ſtrongly felt, and perſpicuouſly deſcribed; and when the meaning of words is aſcertained, and the ſame word has always the ſame idea annexed to it,—— there is an end of metaphyſic.

A body is neither vigorous nor beautiful, in which the ſize of ſome members is above, and that of others below, their due proportion: every part muſt have its proper ſize and ſtrength, otherwiſe the reſult of the whole will be deformity and weakneſs. Neither is real genius conſiſtent with a diſproportionate ſtrength of the reaſoning powers above thoſe of taſte and imagination. Thoſe minds in whom all the faculties are united in their due

pro-

proportion, are far ſuperior to the puerilities of metaphyſical ſcepticiſm. They truſt to their own feelings, which are ſtrong and deciſive, and leave no room for heſitation, or doubts about their authenticity. They ſee through moral ſubjects at one glance; and what they ſay, carries both the heart and the underſtanding along with it. When one has long drudged in the dull and unprofitable pages of metaphyſic, how pleaſing the tranſition to a moral writer of true genius! Would you know what that genius is, and where it may be found? Go to Shakeſpeare, to Bacon, to Johnſon, to Monteſquieu, to Rouſſeau*; and

* As ſeveral perſons, highly reſpectable both for their talents and principles, have deſired to know my reaſons for joining Rouſſeau's name to thoſe of Bacon, Shakeſpeare, Johnſon, and Monteſquieu, I beg leave to take this opportunity of explaining my ſentiments in regard to that celebrated author.

It is becauſe I conſider Rouſſeau as *a moral writer of true genius*, that I mention his name in this place. Senſibility of heart; a talent for extenſive and accurate obſervation; livelineſs and ardor of fancy; and a ſtyle, copious, nervous, and elegant, beyond that of any other French writer,—are his diſtinguiſhing characteriſticks. In argument he is not always equally ſucceſsful, for he often miſtakes declamation for proof, and hypotheſis for fact; but his eloquence, when addreſſed to the heart, over-powers with force irreſiſtable. A greater number of important facts relating to the human mind are recorded in his works than in all the books of all the ſceptical philoſophers ancient and modern. And he appears in general to be a friend to virtue, to mankind, to natural religion, and ſometimes to Chriſtianity.

Yet

and when you have ſtudied them, return, if you can, to HUME, and HOBBES, and MALEBRANCHE,

Yet none even of his beſt works are free from abſurdity. His reaſonings, on the effects of the ſciences, and on the origin and progreſs of human ſociety, are diffuſe, inaccurate, and often weak; much perverted by theories of his own, as well as by too implicit an admittance of the vague aſſertions of travellers, and of the ſyſtems and doctrines of ſome favourite French philoſophers: and he ſeems, in theſe, and frequently too in his other writings, to conſider animal pleaſure and bodily accompliſhments as the happineſs and perfection of man. His plan of education, though admirable in many parts, is in ſome injudicious and dangerous, and impracticable as a whole. The character of Julia's Lover is drawn with a maſterly hand indeed, and well conducted throughout; but the lady has two characters, and thoſe incompatible;——the wife of Wolmar is quite a different perſon from the miſtreſs of St. Preux. Wolmar himſelf is an impoſſible character; deſtitute of principle, yet of rigid virtue; deſtitute of feeling, yet capable of tenderneſs and attachment; delicate in his notions of honour, yet not aſhamed to marry a woman whom he knew to be to all intents and purpoſes devoted to another.

Some of this author's remarks on the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and on the character of its Divine Founder, are not only excellent, but tranſcendently ſo, and I believe no Chriſtian ever read them without feeling his heart warmed, and his faith confirmed. But what he ſays,—of the abſurdities which he fancies to be contained in the ſacred hiſtory,—of the impropriety of the evidence of miracles,—of the analogy between thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt and the tricks of jugglers,—of the inſignificancy and impertinence of prayer,—of the ſufficiency of human reaſon for diſcovering a complete and comfortable ſcheme of natural religion,—of the diſcouraging nature of the terms of ſalvation offered in the Goſpel,—of the meaſure of evidence that ought to accompany divine revelation (which, as he ſtates it, would be incompatible with man's free agency and moral probation)—what he ſays of theſe, and of ſeveral other theologi-

cal

BRANCHE, and LEIBNITZ, and SPINOSA. If, while you learned wiſdom from the former,

cal points of great importance, betrays a degree of ignorance and prejudice, of which, as a philoſopher, as a ſcholar, and as a man, he ſhould have been utterly aſhamed. He appears to be diſtreſſed with his doubts; and yet, without having ever examined whether they be well or ill-founded, ſcruples not to exert all his eloquence on purpoſe to infuſe them into others: a conduct, which I muſt ever condemn as illiberal, unjuſt, and cruel. Had Rouſſeau ſtudied the ſcripture, and the writings of rational divines, with as much care, as he ſeems to have employed in reading the books, and liſtening to the converſation of French infidels, and in attending to the unchriſtian practices and doctrines warranted by ſome eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments; I may venture to aſſure him, that his mind would have been much more at eaſe, his works much more valuable, and his memory much dearer to all good men.

Rouſſeau is, in my opinion, a great philoſophical genius, but wild, irregular, and often ſelf-contradictory; diſpoſed, from the faſhion of the times, and from his deſire of being reputed a bold ſpeaker and freethinker, to adopt the doctrines of infidelity; but of a heart too tender, and an imagination too lively, to permit him to become a thorough-paced infidel. Had he lived in an age leſs addicted to hypotheſis, he might have diſtinguiſhed himſelf as a moral philoſopher of the firſt rank. What pity, that a proper ſenſe of his ſuperiority to his cotemporaries upon the continent could not preſerve him from the contagion of their example! For, though now it is the faſhion for every French declaimer to talk of Bacon and Newton, I queſtion, whether in any age ſince the days of Socrates the building of fanciful theories was ſo epidemical as in the preſent. If the men of learning formerly employed their ingenuity in defending the theories of that philoſopher by whoſe name they were ambitious to be diſtinguiſhed; they are now no leſs induſtrious in deviſing and vindicating, each man a theory of his own.

To

mer, your heart exulted within you, and rejoiced to contemplate the ſublime and ſucceſsful efforts of human intellect; perhaps it may now be of uſe, as a leſſon of humility, to have recourſe to the latter, and, for a while, to behold the picture of a ſoul wandering from thought to thought, without knowing where to fix; and from a total want of feeling, or a total ignorance of what it feels, miſtaking names for things, verbal diſtinctions and analogies for real difference and ſimilitude, and the obſcure inſinuations of a bewilder̃ed underſtanding, puzzled with words, and perverted with theory, for the ſentiments of nature, and the dictates of reaſon. A metaphyſician, exploring the receſſes of the human heart, has juſt ſuch a chance for finding the truth, as a man with microſcopic

To conclude: the writings of this author, with all their imperfections, may be read by the philoſopher with advantage, as they often direct to the right obſervation and interpretation of nature; and by the Chriſtian without detriment, as the cavils they contain againſt religion are too ſlight and too paradoxical to weaken the faith of any one who is tolerably inſtructed in the principles and evidence of Chriſtianity. To the man of taſte they can never fail to recommend themſelves, by the irreſiſtible charms of the compoſition.

The improprieties in Rouſſeau's late conduct appear to me to have ariſen rather from bodily infirmity than from moral depravation, and conſequently to render him an object of forbearance and pity rather than of perſecution or ridicule.

microſcopic eyes would have for finding the road. The latter might amuſe himſelf with contemplating the various mineral ſtrata that are diffuſed along the expanſion of a needle's point; but of the face of nature he could make nothing: he would ſtart back with horror from the caverns yawning between the mountainous grains of ſand that lie before him; but the real gulf or mountain he could not ſee at all.

Is the futility of metaphyſical ſyſtems exaggerated beyond the truth by this alluſion? Tell me, then, in which of thoſe ſyſtems I ſhall find ſuch a deſcription of the ſoul of man as would enable me to know what it is. A great and excellent author obſerves, that if all human things were to periſh except the works of Shakeſpeare, it might ſtill be known from them what ſort of creature man was *: —A ſentiment nobly imagined, and as juſt as it is ſublime! Can the ſame thing be ſaid with truth of any one, or of all the metaphyſical treatiſes that have been written on the nature of man? If an inhabitant of another planet were to read *The Treatiſe of Human Nature*, what notions of human nature could he gather from it?---That man muſt

* Lord Lyttelton's Dialogues of the Dead.

believe one thing by inſtinct, and muſt alſo believe the contrary by reaſon :---That the univerſe is nothing but a *heap* of perceptions unperceived by any ſubſtance: That this univerſe, for any thing man knows to the contrary, might have made itſelf, that is, exiſted before it exiſted; as we have no reaſon to believe that it proceeded from any cauſe, notwithſtanding it may have had a beginning :---That though a man could bring himſelf to believe, yea, and have reaſon to believe, that every thing in the univerſe proceeds from ſome cauſe, yet it would be unreaſonable for him to believe, that the univerſe itſelf proceeds from a cauſe :---That the ſoul of man is not the ſame this moment it was the laſt; that we know not what it is; that it is not one but many things; and that it is nothing at all;---and yet, that in this ſoul is the agency of all the cauſes that operate throughout the ſenſible creation;---and yet, that in this ſoul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either :---That if thieves, cheats, and cut-throats, deſerve to be hanged, cripples, idiots, and diſeaſed perſons, ſhould not be permitted to live; becauſe the imperfections of the latter, and the faults of the former, are on the very ſame footing, both being *diſapproved* by thoſe who contemplate

contemplate them :---That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt :---That man ought to believe nothing, and yet that man's belief ought to be influenced and determined by certain principles :---That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea of our doubts themſelves ; and therefore the utmoſt that philoſophy can do, is to give a doubtful ſolution of doubtful doubts* :---That nature continually impoſes on us, and continually counteracts herſelf, by giving us ſagacity to detect the impoſture :--That we are neceſſarily and unavoidably determined to act and think in certain caſes after a certain manner, but that we ought not to ſubmit to this unavoidable neceſſity ; and that they are fools who do ſo ; ---That man, in all his perceptions, actions, and volitions, is a mere paſſive machine, and has no ſeparate exiſtence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the exiſtence of which, however, he is by no means certain ; and yet, that the nature of all things depends ſo much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce

* Strange as this expreſſion may ſeem, it is not without a precedent. The fourth ſection of Mr. HUME's *Eſſays on the Human Underſtanding* is called, *Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the underſtanding* ; and the fifth ſection bears this title, *Sceptical ſolution of theſe doubts.*

duce heat, nor the ſun light, without an expreſs act of the human underſtanding:--That none of our actions are in our power; that we ought to exerciſe power over our actions; and that there is no ſuch thing as power:--- That body and motion may be regarded as the cauſe of thought; and that body does not exiſt:---That the univerſe exiſts in the mind; and that the mind does not exiſt;--- That the human underſtanding, acting alone, does entirely ſubvert itſelf, and prove by argument, that by argument nothing can be proved:—Theſe are a few of the many ſublime myſteries brought to light by this great philoſopher. But theſe, however they may illuminate our terreſtrial *literati*, would convey no information to the planetary ſtranger, except perhaps, that the ſage metaphyſician knew nothing of his ſubject.

What a ſtrange detail! does not the reader exclaim? Can it be, that any man ſhould ever bring himſelf to think, or imagine that he could bring others to think, ſo abſurdly! What a taſte, what a heart muſt he poſſeſs, whoſe delight it is, to repreſent nature as a chaos, and man as a monſter; to ſearch for deformity and confuſion, where others rejoice in the perception of order and beauty; and to ſeek to imbitter the happieſt moments

of

of human life, namely, thoſe we employ in contemplating the works of creation, and adoring their Author, by this ſuggeſtion, equally falſe and malevolent, that the moral as well as material world, is nothing but darkneſs, diſſonance, and perplexity!

" Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds
" Perverſe, all monſtrous, all prodigious things,
" Abominable, unutterable, and worſe
" Than fables yet hath feign'd, or fear conceiv'd!

Were this ſyſtem a true one, we ſhould be little obliged to him who gives it to the public; for we could hardly imagine a greater misfortune than ſuch a caſt of underſtanding as would make us believe it. But founded, as it is, in words miſunderſtood, and facts miſrepreſented;—ſupported, as it is, by ſophiſtry ſo egregious, and often ſo puerile, that we can hardly conceive how even the author himſelf ſhould be impoſed upon by it;——ſurely he who attempts to obtrude it on the weak and unwary, muſt have ſomething in his diſpoſition, which, to a man of a good heart, or good taſte, can never be the object of envy.

We are told, that the end of ſcepticiſm, as it was taught by Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, and other ancients, was to obtain *indiſturbance*,

ance. I know not whether this be the end our modern ſceptics have in view; if it is, the means they employ for attaining it are ſtrangely prepoſterous. If the proſpect of nature exhibited in their ſyſtems produce tranquillity or indiſturbance, how dreadful muſt that tranquillity be! It is like that of a man, turned adrift amidſt a dark and tempeſtuous ocean, in a crazy ſkiff, with neither rudder nor compaſs, who, exhauſted by the agitations of deſpair and diſtraction, loſes at laſt all ſenſe of his miſery, and becomes totally ſtupid. In fact, the only thing, that can enable ſceptics to endure exiſtence, is inſenſibility. And how far that is conſiſtent with delicacy of mind, let thoſe among them explain who are ambitious of paſſing for men of taſte.

It is remarked by a very ingenious and amiable writer, that "many philoſophers "have been infidels, few men of taſte and "ſentiment *." This, if I miſtake not, holds equally true of our ſceptics in philoſophy, and infidels in religion: and it holds true of both for the ſame reaſon. The views and expectations of the infidel and ſceptic are ſo

* Dr. Gregory's Comparative View, p. 201. fourth edition.

ſo full of horror, that to a man of taſte, that is, of ſenſibility and imagination, they are inſupportable. On the other hand, what true religion and true philoſophy dictate of God, and providence, and man, is ſo charming, ſo conſonant with all the finer and nobler feelings in human nature, that every man of taſte who hears of it muſt wiſh it to be true: and I never yet heard of one perſon of candour, who wiſhed to find the evidence of the goſpel ſatisfactory, and did not find it ſo. Dull imaginations and hard hearts can bear the thought of endleſs confuſion, of virtue depreſſed and vice triumphant, of an univerſe peopled with fiends and furies, of creation annihilated, and chaos reſtored to remain a ſcene of darkneſs and ſolitude for ever and for ever: but it is not ſo with the benevolent and tender-hearted. Their notions are regulated by another ſtandard; their hopes and fears, their joys and ſorrows, are quite of a different kind.

The moral powers and the powers of taſte are more congenial than is commonly imagined; and he who is deſtitute of the latter will ever be found as incapable to deſcribe or judge of the former, as a man wanting the ſenſe of ſmell is to decide concerning reliſhes. Nothing is more true, than that "a little "learning is a dangerous thing." If we are

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but a little acquainted with one part of a complicated ſyſtem, how is it poſſible for us to judge aright, either of the nature of the whole, or the fitneſs of that part! And a little knowledge of one ſmall part of the mental ſyſtem, is all that any man can be allowed to have, who is defective in imagination, ſenſibility, and the other powers of taſte. Yet, as ignorance is apt to produce temerity, I ſhould not be ſurprized to find ſuch men moſt forward to attempt reducing the philoſophy of human nature to ſyſtem: and, if they made the attempt, I ſhould not wonder that they fell into the moſt important miſtakes. Like a ſhort-ſighted landſcape painter, they might poſſibly delineate ſome of the largeſt and roughеſt figures with tolerable exactneſs: but of the minuter objects, ſome would wholly eſcape their notice, and others appear blotted and diſtorted, on which nature had beſtowed the utmoſt delicacy of colour, and harmony of proportion.

The modern ſceptical philoſophy is as corrupt a body of ſcience as ever appeared in the world. And it deſerves our notice, that the moſt conſiderable of its adherents and promoters were more eminent for ſubtlety of reaſon, than for ſenſibility of taſte. We know that this was the caſe with MALEBRANCHE, of whom Mr. D'Alembert ſays, that

that he could not read the moſt ſublime verſes without wearineſs and diſguſt *. This was alſo the caſe with another author, to whom our later ſceptics are more obliged than they ſeem willing to acknowledge, I mean Mr. HOBBES; whoſe tranſlation of Homer bears juſt ſuch a reſemblance to the Iliad and Odyſſey, as a putrefying carcaſe bears to a beautiful and vigorous human body. Of the taſte of our later ſceptics, I leave the reader to judge from his own obſervation.

The philoſophy of the mind, if ſuch as it ought to be, would certainly intereſt us more than any other ſcience. Are the ſceptical treatiſes on this ſubject intereſting? Do they bring conviction to the judgment, or delight to the fancy? Do they either reach the heart, or ſeem to proceed from it? Do they make us better acquainted with ourſelves, or better prepared for the buſineſs of life? Do they not rather infeeble and haraſs the ſoul, divert its attention from every thing that can enlarge and improve it, give it a diſreliſh for itſelf, and for every thing elſe, and diſqualify it alike for action, and for uſeful knowledge?

Other cauſes might be aſſigned for the preſent degeneracy of the moral ſciences. I ſhall

* Eſſai ſur le Gout.

ſhall mention one, which I the rather chuſe to take notice of, and inſiſt upon, becauſe it has been generally overlooked. DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE introduced the faſhion, which continues to this day, of neglecting the ancients in all their philoſophical inquiries. We ſeem to think, becauſe we are confeſſedly ſuperior in ſome ſciences, that we muſt be ſo in all. But that this is a raſh judgment, may eaſily be made appear, even on the ſuppoſition, that human genius is nearly the ſame in all ages.

When accidental diſcovery, long experience, or profound inveſtigation, are the means of advancing a ſcience, it is reaſonable to expect, that the improvements of that ſcience will increaſe with length of time. Accordingly we find, that in natural philoſophy, natural hiſtory, and ſome parts of mathematical learning, the moderns are far ſuperior to the ancients. But the ſcience of human nature, being attainable rather by intuition than by deep reaſoning or nice experiment, muſt depend for its cultivation upon other cauſes. Different ages and nations have different cuſtoms. Sometimes it is the faſhion to be reſerved and affected, at other times to be ſimple and ſincere: ſometimes, therefore, it will be eaſy, and at other times difficult, to gain a competent knowledge

ledge of human nature by obſervation. In the old romances, we ſeek for human nature in vain; the manners are all affected; prudery is the higheſt, and almoſt the only ornament, of the woman; and a fantaſtical honour of the men: but the writers adapted themſelves to the prevailing taſte, and painted the manners as they ſaw them. In our own country, we have ſeen various modes of affectation, ſucceſſively prevail within a few years. To ſay nothing of preſent times; every body knows, how much pedantry, libertiniſm, and falſe wit, contributed to diſguiſe human nature in the laſt century. And I apprehend, that in all monarchies one mode or other of artificial manners muſt always prevail; to the formation of which the character of princes, the taſte of the times, and a variety of other cauſes will co-operate.

Monteſquieu's opinion, that the courts of monarchs muſt always of neceſſity be corrupt, I cannot ſubſcribe to, I think, that virtue may be, and ſometimes is, the principle of action, even in the higheſt offices of monarchy: my meaning is, that, under this form of government, human manners, muſt generally deviate, more or leſs, from the ſimplicity of nature, and that, conſequently, human ſentiments muſt be of more difficult inveſtigation than under ſome other forms. In Courts, it ſeems requiſite, for the ſake of that order which

which is eſſential to dignity, to eſtabliſh certain punctilios in dreſs, language, and geſture: there too, the moſt inviolable ſecrecy is expedient; and there, where men are always under the eye of their ſuperiors, and for the moſt part engaged in the purſuits of ambition or intereſt, a ſmoothneſs of behaviour will naturally take place, which, among perſons of ordinary talents, and ordinary virtue, muſt on many occaſions degenerate into hypocriſy. The cuſtoms of the court are always imitated by the higher ranks; the middle ranks follow the higher; and the people come after as faſt as they can. It is however, in the laſt mentioned claſs, where nature appears with the leaſt diſguiſe: but, unhappily for moral ſcience, the vulgar are ſeldom objects of curioſity, either to our philoſophers, or hiſtorians.

The influence of theſe cauſes, in diſtinguiſhing human ſentiments, will, I preſume, be greater or leſs, according as the monarchy partakes more or leſs of democratical principles.—There is, indeed, one ſet of ſentiments, which monarchy and modern manners are peculiarly fitted for diſcloſing, I mean thoſe that relate to gallantry: but whether theſe tend to make human nature more or leſs known, might perhaps bear a queſtion.

Modern hiſtory ought, on many accounts, to intereſt us more than the antient. It deſcribes manners that are familiar to us, events whereof

whereof we ſee and feel the conſequences, political eſtabliſhments on which our property and ſecurity depend, and places and perſons in which experience or tradition has already given us a concern. And yet I believe it will be generally acknowledged, that the ancient hiſtories, particularly of Greece and Rome, are more intereſting than thoſe of later times. In fact, the moſt affecting part, both of hiſtory and of poetry, is that which beſt diſplays the characters, manners, and ſentiments of men. Hiſtories that are deficient in this reſpect, may communicate inſtruction to the geographer, the warrior, the genealogiſt, and the politician; but will never pleaſe the general taſte, becauſe they excite no paſſion, and awaken no ſympathy. Now, I cannot help thinking, that the perſonages deſcribed in modern hiſtory have, with a very few exceptions, a ſtiffneſs and reſerve about them, which doth not ſeem to adhere to the great men of antiquity, particularly of Greece. I will not ſay, that our hiſtorians have leſs ability or leſs induſtry; but I would ſay, that democratical governments, like thoſe of ancient Greece, are more favourable to ſimplicity of manners, and conſequently to the knowledge of the human mind, than our modern monarchies. At Athens and Sparta, the public aſſemblies, the public exerciſes, the regular attendance given

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to all the public ſolemnities, whether religious or civil, and other inſtitutions that might be mentioned, gave the citizens many opportunities of being well acquainted with one another. There the great men were not cooped up in palaces and coaches; they were almoſt conſtantly in the open air, and on foot. The people ſaw them every day, converſed with them, and obſerved their behaviour in the hours of relaxion, as well as of buſineſs. Themiſtocles could call every citizen of Athens by his name; a proof that the great men courted an univerſal acquaintance.

No degree of genius will ever make one a proficient in the ſcience of man, without accurate obſervation of human nature in all its varieties. Homer, the greateſt maſter in this ſcience ever known, paſſed the moſt of his life in travelling: his poverty, and other misfortunes, made him often dependent on the meaneſt, as his talents recommended him to the friendſhip of the greateſt; ſo that what he ſays of Ulyſſes may juſtly be applied to himſelf, that "he viſited many ſtates and na-" tions, and knew the characters of many " men." Virgil had not the ſame opportunities: he lived in an age of more refinement, and was perhaps too much converſant in courtly life, as well as too baſhful in his deportment, and delicate in his conſtitution,

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to ſtudy the varieties of human nature, where in a monarchy they are moſt conſpicious, namely in the middle and lower ranks of mankind. Need we wonder, then, that in the diſpaly of character he falls ſo far ſhort of his great original? Shakeſpeare was familiarly acquainted with all ranks and conditions of men; without which, notwithſtanding his unbounded imagination, it is not to be ſuppoſed, that he could have ſucceeded ſo well in delineating every ſpecies of human character, from the conſtable to the monarch, from the hero to the clown. And it deſerves our notice, that, however ignorant he might be of Latin and Greek, he was well acquainted, by tranſlation, with ſome of the ancients, particularly Plutarch, whom he ſeems to have ſtudied with much attention, and who indeed excels all hiſtorians in exhibiting lively and intereſting views of human nature. Great viciſſitudes of fortune gave Fielding an opportunity of aſſociating with all claſſes of men, except perhaps the higheſt, whom he rarely attempts to deſcribe: Swift's way of life is well known: and I have been told, that Congreve uſed to mingle in diſguiſe with the common people, and paſs whole days and weeks among them.

That the ancient painters and ſtatuaries were in many reſpects ſuperior to the modern, is univerſally allowed. The monuments of their genius

genius that ſtill remain, would convince us of it, even though we were to ſuppoſe the accounts given by Pliny, Lucian, and other contemporary authors, to be a little exaggerated. The uncommon ſpirit and elegance of their attitudes and proportions are obvious to every eye: and a great maſter ſeems to think, that modern artiſts, though they ought to imitate, can never hope to equal the magnificence of their ideas, or the beauty of their figures*. To account for this, we need not ſuppoſe, that human genius decays as the world grows older. It may be aſcribed, partly to the ſuperior elegance of the human form in thoſe days, and partly to the artiſts having then better opportunities of obſerving the human body, free from the incumbrances of dreſs, in all the varieties of action and motion. The ancient diſcipline of the Greeks and Romans, particularly the former, was admirably calculated for improving the human body in health, ſtrength, ſwiftneſs, flexibility, and grace. In theſe reſpects, therefore, they could hardly fail to excel the moderns, whoſe education and manners tend rather to enervate the body, and cramp all its faculties. And as the ancients performed their exerciſes in public, and performed many of them naked, and thought it honourable

* Freſnoy, De Arte Graphica, lin. 190.

able to excel in them; as their cloathing was much leſs cumberſome than our Gothic apparel, and ſhowed the body to more advantage; it muſt be allowed, that their painters and ſtatuaries had far better opportunities of obſervation than ours enjoy, who ſee nothing but aukward and languid figures, diſguiſed by an unweildy and ungraceful attire.

Will it not, then, be acknowledged, that the ancients may have excelled the moderns in the ſcience of human nature, provided it can be ſhown, that they had better opportunities of obſerving it? That this was the caſe, appears from what has been already ſaid. And that they really excelled us in this ſcience, will not be doubted by thoſe who acknowledge their ſuperiority in rhetoric and criticiſm; two arts which are founded in the philoſophy of the human mind. But a more direct proof of the point in queſtion may be had in the writings of Homer, Plutarch, and the Socratic philoſophers; which, for their admirable pictures of human nature in its genuine ſimplicity, are not equalled by any compoſitions of a later date. Of Ariſtotle I ſay nothing. We are aſſured by thoſe who have read his works, that no author ever underſtood human nature better than he. Fielding himſelf* pays him this

* Fielding's works, vol. xi. page 384, London 1766, 12mo.

compliment; and his teſtimony will be allowed to have conſiderable weight.

Let me therefore recommend it to thoſe philoſophers who may hereafter make human nature the ſubject of their ſpeculation, to ſtudy the ancients more than our modern ſceptics ſeem to have done. If we ſet out, like the author of *The Treatiſe of Human Nature*, with a fixed purpoſe to advance as many paradoxes as poſſible; or with this fooliſh conceit, that men in all former ages were utter ſtrangers to themſelves, and to one another; and that we are the firſt of our ſpecies on whom Nature has beſtowed any glimmerings of diſcernment; we may depend on it, that in proportion as our vanity and arrogance are great, our ſucceſs will be ſmall. It will be, like that of a muſician, who ſhould take it in his head, that Corelli had no taſte in counterpoint, nor Handel or Jackſon any genius for melody; of an epic poet, who ſhould fancy that Homer, Virgil, and Milton, were very bad writers; or of a painter, who ſhould ſuppoſe all his brethren of former times to have been unacquainted with the colours, lineaments, and proportions of viſible objects.

If Columbus, before he ſet out on his famous expedition to the weſtern world, had amuſed himſelf with writing a hiſtory of the

the countries he was going to viſit; would the lovers of truth, and interpreters of nature, have received any improvement or ſatisfaction from ſuch a ſpecimen of his ingenuity? And is not the ſyſtem which, without regard to experience, a philoſopher frames in his cloſet, concerning the nature of man, equally frivolous? If Columbus, in ſuch a hiſtory, had deſcribed the Americans with two heads, cloven feet, wings, and a ſcarlet complexion; and, after viſiting them, and finding his deſcription falſe in every particular, had yet publiſhed that deſcription to the world, affirming it to be true, and at the ſame time acknowledging, that it did not correſpond with his experience; I know not whether mankind would have been moſt diſpoſed to blame his diſingenuity, to laught at his abſurdity, or to pity his want of underſtanding. And yet we have known a metaphyſician to contrive a ſyſtem of human nature, and, though ſenſible that it did not correſpond with the real appearances of human nature, deliver it to the world as incontrovertible truth; we have heard this ſyſtem applauded as a maſter-piece of genius, and admitted as incontrovertible truth; and we have ſeen the experience of individuals, the univerſal conſent of nations, the accumulated wiſdom of ages, and every prin-

ciple in philoſophy, every truth in religion, and every dictate of common ſenſe, ſacrificed to this contemptible and ſelf-contradictory chimera.

I would further recommend it to our moral philoſophers, to ſtudy themſelves with candour and attention, and cultivate an acquaintance with mankind, eſpecially with thoſe whoſe manners retain moſt of the truth and ſimplicity of nature. Acquaintance with the great makes a man of faſhion, but will not make a philoſopher. They who are ambitious to merit this appellation, think nothing below them which the author of nature has been pleaſed to create, to preſerve, and to adorn.—Away with this paſſion for ſyſtem-building! it is pedantry: away with this luſt of paradox! it is preſumption. Be equally aſhamed of dogmatical prejudice, and ſceptical incredulity; for both are as remote from the ſpirit of true philoſophy, as bullying and cowardice from true valour.

It will be ſaid, perhaps, that a general knowledge of man is ſufficient for the philoſopher; and that this particular knowledge which we recommend, is neceſſary only for the noveliſt and poet. But let it be remembered, that many important errors in moral philoſophy have ariſen from the want of this par-

particular knowledge; and that it is by too little, not by too much experience, by ſcanty, not by copious, induction, that philoſophy is corrupted. Men have rarely framed a ſyſtem, without firſt conſulting experience in regard to ſome few obvious facts. We are apt to be prejudiced in favour of the notions that prevail within our own narrow circle; but we muſt quit that circle if we would diveſt ourſelves of prejudice, as we muſt go from home if we would get rid of our provincial accent. "Horace aſſerts wiſdom "and good ſenſe to be the ſource and prin-"ciple of good writing; for the attain-"ment of which he preſcribes a careful "ſtudy of the Socratic, that is, moral wiſ-"dom, and a thorough acquaintance with "human nature that great exemplar of "manners, as he finely calls it; or, in other "words, a wide extenſive view of real prac-"tical life. The joint direction of theſe "two," I quote the words of an admirable critic and moſt ingenious philoſopher, "as "means of acquiring moral knowledge, is "perfectly neceſſary. For the former, when "alone, is apt to grow abſtracted and un-"affecting; the latter, uninſtructing and "ſuperficial. The philoſopher talks with-"out experience, and the man of the world "with-

" without principles. United they ſupply " each other's defects; while the man of the " world borrows ſo much of the philoſopher, " as to be able to adjuſt the ſeveral ſenti- " ments with preciſion and exactneſs; and " the philoſopher ſo much of the man of " the world, as to copy the manners of " life (which we can only do by experience) " with truth and ſpirit. Both together fur- " niſh a thorough and complete comprehen- " ſion of human life *."

That I may not be thought a blind admirer of antiquity, I would here crave the reader's indulgence for one ſhort digreſſion more, in order to put him in mind of an important error in morals, inferred from partial and inaccurate experience, by no leſs a perſon than Ariſtotle himſelf. He argues, " That men of little genius, and great bo- " dily ſtrength, are by nature deſtined to " ſerve, and thoſe of better capacity, to com- " mand; that the natives of Greece, and of " ſome other countries, being naturally ſu- " perior in genius, have a natural right to " empire; and that the reſt of mankind, " being naturally ſtupid, are deſtined to la- " bour and ſlavery †." This reaſoning is now,

* Hurd's Commentary on Horace's Epiſtle to the Piſos, p. 25. edit. 4.

† De Republ. lib. 1. cap. 5, 6.

now, alas! of little advantage to Ariſtotle's countrymen, who have for many ages been doomed to that ſlavery, which, in his judgment, nature had deſtined them to impoſe on others; and many nations whom he would have conſigned to everlaſting ſtupidity, have ſhown themſelves equal in genius to the moſt exalted of human kind. It would have been more worthy of Ariſtotle, to have inferred man's natural and univerſal right to liberty, from that natural and univerſal paſſion with which men deſire it, and from the ſalutary conſequences to learning, to virtue, and to every human improvement, of which it never fails to be productive. He wanted, perhaps, to deviſe ſome excuſe for ſervitude; a practice which, to their eternal reproach, both Greeks and Romans tolerated even in the days of their glory.

Mr. HUME argues nearly in the ſame manner in regard to the ſuperiority of white men over black. "I am apt to ſuſpect," ſays he, "the negroes, and in general all the other "ſpecies of men, (for there are four or five "different kinds), to be naturally inferior "to the whites. There *never was* a civiliz-"ed nation of any other complexion than "white, *nor even any individual* eminent ei-"ther in action or ſpeculation. *No* inge-"nious manufactures among them, *no* arts,

"no

" no ſciences.—There are negroe-ſlaves diſ-
" perſed all over Europe, of which *none* ever
" diſcovered any ſymptons of ingenuity *."

Theſe aſſertions are ſtrong; but I know not whether they have any thing elſe to recommend them.—For, firſt, though true, they would not prove the point in queſtion, except it were alſo proved, that the Africans and Americans, even though arts and ſciences were introduced among them, would ſtill remain unſuſceptible of cultivation. The inhabitants of Great Britain and France were as ſavage two thouſand years ago, as thoſe of Africa and America are at this day. To civilize a nation, is a work which requires long time to accompliſh. And one may as well ſay of an infant, that he can never become a man, as of a nation now barbarous, that it never can be civilized.—Secondly, of the facts here aſſerted, no man could have ſufficient evidence, except from a perſonal acquaintance with all the negroes that now are, or ever were, on the face of the earth. Theſe people write no hiſtories; and all the reports of all the travellers that ever viſited them, will not amount to any thing like a proof of what is here affirmed.—But, thirdly, we know that theſe aſſertions are not true.

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* Hume's Eſſay on National Characters.

The empires of Peru and Mexico could not have been governed, nor the metropolis of the latter built after ſo ſingular a manner, in the middle of a lake, without men eminent both for action and ſpeculation. Every body has heard of the magnificence, good government, and ingenuity, of the ancient Peruvians. The Africans and Americans are known to have many ingenious manufactures and arts among them, which even Europeans would find it no eaſy matter to imitate. Sciences indeed they have none, becauſe they have no letters; but in oratory, ſome of them, particularly the indians *of the Five Nations*, are ſaid to be greatly our ſuperiors. It will be readily allowed, that the condition of a ſlave is not favourable to genius of any kind; and yet, the negroe-ſlaves diſperſed over Europe, have often diſcovered ſymptoms of ingenuity, notwithſtanding their unhappy circumſtances. They become excellent handicraftſmen, and practical muſicians, and indeed learn every thing their maſters are at pains to teach them, perfidy and debauchery not excepted. That a negroe-ſlave, who can neither read nor write, nor ſpeak any European language, who is not permitted to do any thing but what his maſter commands, and who has not a ſingle friend on earth, but is univerſally conſidered and

and treated as if he were of a ſpecies inferior to the human;—that ſuch a creature ſhould ſo diſtinguiſh himſelf among Europeans, as to be talked of through the world for a man of genius, is ſurely no reaſonable expectation. To ſuppoſe him of an inferior ſpecies, becauſe he does not thus diſtinguiſh himſelf, is juſt as rational, as to ſuppoſe any private European of an inferior ſpecies, becauſe he has not raiſed himſelf to the condition of royalty.

Had the Europeans been deſtitute of the arts of writing, and working in iron, they might have remained to this day as barbarous as the natives of Africa and America. Nor is the invention of theſe arts to be aſcribed to our ſuperior capacity. The genius of the inventor is not always to be eſtimated according to the importance of the invention. Gunpowder, and the mariner's compaſs, have produced wonderful revolutions in human affairs, and yet were accidental diſcoveries. Such, probably, were the firſt eſſays in writing, and working in iron. Suppoſe them the effects of contrivance; they were at leaſt contrived by a few individuals; and if they required a ſuperiority of underſtanding, or of ſpecies, in the inventors, thoſe inventors, and their deſcendents, are the only

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perſons who can lay claim to the honour of that ſuperiority.

That every practice and ſentiment is barbarous which is not according to the uſages of modern Europe, ſeems to be a fundamental maxim with many of our critics and philoſophers. Their remarks often put us in mind of the fable of the man and the lion. If negroes or Indians were diſpoſed to recriminate; if a Lucian or a Voltaire from the coaſt of Guinea, or from *the Five Nations*, were to pay us a viſit; what a picture of European manners might he preſent to his countrymen at his return! Nor would caricatura, or exaggeration, be neceſſary to render it hideous. A plain hiſtorical account of ſome of our moſt faſhionable duelliſts, gamblers, and adulterers, (to name no more), would exhibit ſpecimens of brutiſh barbarity and ſottiſh infatuation, ſuch as might vie with any that ever appeared in Kamſchatka, California, or the land of Hottentots.

It is eaſy to ſee with what views ſome modern authors throw out theſe hints to prove the natural inferiority of negroes. But let ever friend to humanity pray, that they may be diſappointed. Britons are famous for generoſity; a virtue in which it is eaſy for them to excel both the Romans and the Greeks. Let it never be ſaid, that ſlavery

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is countenanced by the braveſt and moſt generous people on earth; by a people who are animated with that heroic paſſion, the love of liberty, beyond all nations ancient or modern; and the fame of whoſe toilſome, but unwearied, perſeverance, in vindicating, at the expence of life and fortune, the ſacred rights of mankind, will ſtrike terror into the hearts of ſycophants and tyrants, and excite the admiration and gratitude of all good men to the lateſt poſterity.

CHAP. III.

Conſequences of Metaphyſical Scepticiſm.

AFTER all, it will perhaps be objected to this diſcourſe, that I have laid too much ſtreſs upon the conſequences of metaphyſical abſurdity, and repreſented them as much more dangerous than they are found to be in fact. I ſhall be told, that many of the controverſies in metaphyſick are merely verbal; and the errors proceeding from them of ſo abſtract a nature, that philoſophers run little riſk, and the vulgar no riſk at all, of be-

being influenced by them in practice. It will be ſaid, that I never heard of any man who fell a ſacrifice to BERKELEY's ſyſtem, by breaking his neck over a material precipice, which he had taken for an ideal one; nor of any Fataliſt, whoſe morals were, upon the whole, more exceptionable than thoſe of the aſſerters of free agency: in a word, that whatever effect ſuch tenets may have upon the underſtanding, they ſeldom or never produce any ſenſible effects upon the heart. In conſidering this objection, I muſt confine myſelf to a few topics; for the ſubject to which it leads is of vaſt extent. The influence of the metaphyſical ſpirit upon art, ſcience, and manners, would furniſh matter for a large treatiſe. It will ſuffice at preſent to ſhow, that metaphyſical errors are not harmleſs, but may produce, and actually have produced, ſome very important and intereſting conſequences.

I begin with an obſervation often made, and indeed obvious enough, namely, That happineſs is the end of our being; and that knowledge, and even truth itſelf, are valuable only as they tend to promote it. Every uſeleſs ſtudy is a pernicious thing; becauſe it waſtes our time, and miſemploys our faculties. To prove that metaphyſical abſurdities do no good, would therefore ſufficiently

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juſtify the preſent undertaking. But it requires no deep ſagacity to be able to prove a great deal more.

We acknowledge, however, that all metaphyſical errors are not equally dangerous. There is an obſcurity in the abſtract ſciences, as they are commonly taught, which is often no bad preſervative againſt their influence. This obſcurity is ſometimes unavoidable, on account of the inſufficiency of language; ſometimes it is owing to the ſpiritleſs or ſlovenly ſtyle of the writer: and ſometimes it is affected; as when a philoſopher, from prudential conſiderations, thinks fit to diſguiſe any occaſional attack on the religion or laws of his country, by ſome artful equivocation, in the form of allegory, dialogue, or fable *. The ſtyle of *The treatiſe of Human*

* Mr. HUME is not unacquainted with this piece of policy. His apology for Atheiſm he delivers by the mouth of a *friend*, in the way of conference, prefaced with a declaration, that though he cannot by any means approve many of the ſentiments of that friend, yet he thinks they bear ſome relation to the chain of reaſoning carried on in his Inquiry concerning Human Nature. He had ſomething, it ſeems, to ſay againſt his Maker, which he modeſtly acknowledges to be curious, and worthy of attention, and which he thought, no doubt, to be mighty ſmart and clever. To call it what it really is, An attempt to vindicate Atheiſm, or what he probably thought it, A vindication of Atheiſm, ſeemed dangerous, and might diſguſt many of his well-meaning readers. He calls it, therefore, *An Eſſay on a Particular Providence and a Future State*, and puts his capital argu-

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man Nature is ſo exceedingly obſcure and unintereſting, that if the author had not in his *Eſſays* republiſhed the capital doctrines of that work in a ſtyle more elegant and ſprightly, a confutation of them would have been altogether unneceſſary: their uncouth and gloomy aſpect would have deterred moſt people from courting their acquaintance. And, after all, tho' this author is one of the deadlieſt, he is not perhaps one of the moſt dangerous enemies of religion. Bolingbroke, his inferior in ſubtlety, but far ſuperior in wit, eloquence, and knowledge of mankind, is more dangerous, becauſe more entertaining. So that though the reader may be diſpoſed to applaud the patriotiſm of the grand jury of Weſtminſter, who preſented the poſthumous works of that Noble Lord as a public nuiſance, he muſt be ſenſible, that there was no neceſſity for affixing any ſuch ſtigma to the philoſophical writings of the Scottiſh author. And yet it cannot be denied, that even

ments in the mouth of another perſon: thus providing, by the ſame generous, candid, and manly expedient, a ſnare for the unwary reader, and an evaſion for himſelf. Perhaps it will be aſked, what I mean by the word *Atheiſt*? I anſwer, A reaſonable creature, who diſbelieves the being of God, or thinks it inconſiſtent with ſound reaſon, to believe, that the Great Firſt Cauſe is perfect in holineſs, power, wiſdom, juſtice, and beneficence,—is a ſpeculative Atheiſt; and he who endeavours to inſtil the ſame unbelief into others, is a practical Atheiſt.

even theſe, notwithſtanding their obſcurity, have done miſchief enough to make every ſober-minded perſon earneſtly wiſh, that they had never exiſted.

Further, ſome metaphyſical errors are ſo groſsly abſurd, that there is hardly a poſſibility of their perverting our conduct. Such, conſidered in itſelf, is the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of matter; which no man in his ſenſes was ever capable of believing for a ſingle moment. Pyrrho was a vain hypocrite: he took it in his head to ſay, that he believed nothing, becauſe he wanted to be taken notice of: he affected, too, to act up to this pretended diſbelief; and would not of his own accord ſtep aſide to avoid a dog, a chariot, or a precipice: but he always took care to have ſome friends or ſervants at hand, whoſe buſineſs it was to keep the philoſopher out of harm's way.—That the univerſe is nothing but a *heap* of impreſſions and ideas unperceived by any ſubſtance, is another of thoſe profound myſteries, from which we need not apprehend much danger; becauſe it is ſo perfectly abſurd, that no words but ſuch as imply a contradiction, will expreſs it. I know not whether the abſurdity of a ſyſtem was ever before urged as an apology for its author. But it is better to be abſurd than miſchievous: and happy it were for

for the world, and much to the credit of ſome perſons now in it, if metaphyſicians were chargeable with nothing worſe than abſurdity.

Again, certain errors in our theories of human nature, conſidered in themſelves, are in ſome meaſure harmleſs, when the principles that oppoſe their influence are ſtrong and active. A gentle diſpoſition, confirmed habits of virtue, obedience to law, a regard to order, or even the fear of puniſhment, often prove antidotes to metaphyſical poiſon. When Fatality has theſe principles to combat, it may puzzle the judgment, but will not corrupt the heart. Natural inſtinct never fails to oppoſe it; all men believe themſelves free agents, as long at leaſt as they keep clear of metaphyſic; nay, ſo powerful is the ſentiment of moral liberty, that I cannot think it was ever entirely ſubdued in any rational being. But if it were ſubdued, (and ſurely no Fataliſt will acknowledge it invincible); if the oppoſite principles ſhould at the ſame time ceaſe to act; and if debauchery, bad example, and licentious writings, ſhould extinguiſh or weaken the ſenſe of duty; what might not be apprehended from men who are above law, or can ſcreen themſelves from puniſhment? What virtue is to be expected from a being who believes itſelf a

mere machine? If I were perſuaded, that the evil I commit is impoſed upon me by fatal neceſſity, I ſhould think repentance as abſurd as Xerxes ſcourging the waves of the Helleſpont; and be as little diſpoſed to form reſolutions of amendment, as to contrive ſchemes for preventing the frequent eclipſes of the ſatellites of Jupiter. Every author who publiſhes an eſſay in behalf of Fatality, is willing to run the riſk of bringing all men over to his opinion. What if this ſhould be the conſequence? If it be poſſible to make one reaſonable creature a Fataliſt, may it not be poſſible to make many ſuch? And would this be a matter of little or no moment? It is demonſtrable, that it would not. But we have already explained ourſelves on this head.

Other metaphyſical errors there are, which, though they do not ſtrike more directly at the foundations of virtue, are more apt to influence mankind, becauſe they are not ſo vigorouſly counteracted by any particular propenſity. What ſhall we ſay to the theory of Hobbes, who makes the diſtinction between vice and virtue to be wholly artificial, without any foundation in the divine will, or human conſtitution, and depending entirely on the arbitrary laws of human governors? According to this account, no action that is

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commanded by a king can be vitious, and none virtuous except warranted by that authority. Were this opinion univerſal, what could deter men from ſecret wickedneſs, or ſuch as is not cogniſable by law? What could reſtrain governors from the utmoſt inſolence of tyranny? What but a miracle could ſave the human race from perdition?

In the preface to one of Mr. HUME's late publications, we are preſented with an elaborate panegyric on the author. "He hath "exerted, ſays the writer of the preface, "thoſe great talents he received from Na"ture, and the acquiſitions he made by "ſtudy, in the ſearch of truth, and in pro"moting the good of mankind." A noble encomium indeed! If it be a true one, what are we to think of a Douglas, a Campbell, a Gerard, a Reid, and ſome others, who have attacked ſeveral of Mr. HUME's opinions, and proved them to be contrary to truth, and ſubverſive of the good of mankind? I thought indeed, that the works of thoſe excellent writers had given great ſatisfaction to the friends of truth and virtue, and done an important ſervice to ſociety: but, if I believe this prefacer, I muſt look on them, as well as on this attempt of my own, with deteſtation and horror. But before ſo great a change in my ſentiments can take place, it will be

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neceſſary, that Mr. HUME prove, to my ſatisfaction, that he is neither the author nor the publiſher of the *Eſſays* that bear his name, nor of the *Treatiſe of Human Nature*. For I will not take it on his, nor on any man's word, that religion, both revealed and natural, and all conviction in regard to truth, are detrimental to mankind. And it is moſt certain, that he, if he is indeed the author of thoſe Eſſays, and of that Treatiſe, hath exerted his great talents, and employed ſeveral years of his life, in endeavouring to perſuade the world, that the fundamental doctrines of natural religion are irrational, and the proofs of revealed religion ſuch as ought not to ſatisfy an impartial mind; and that there is not in any ſcience an evidence of truth ſufficient to produce certainty. Suppoſe theſe opinions eſtabliſhed in the world, and ſay, if you can, that the good of mankind would be promoted by them. To me it ſeems impoſſible for ſociety to exiſt under the influence of ſuch opinions. Nor let it be thought, that we give an unfavourable view of human nature, when we inſiſt on the neceſſity of good principles for the preſervation of good order. Such a total ſubverſion of human ſentiment is, I believe, impoſſible: mankind, at their very worſt, are not ſuch monſters, as to admit it; reaſon, conſcience, taſte, habit,

habit, intereſt, fear, muſt perpetually oppoſe it: but the philoſophy that aims at a total ſubverſion of human ſentiment is not on that account the leſs deteſtable. And yet it is ſaid of the authors of this philoſophy, that they exert their great talents in promoting the good of mankind. What an inſult on human nature and common ſenſe! If mankind are tame enough to acquieſce in ſuch an inſult, and ſervile enough to reply, "It is "true, we have been much obliged to the "celebrated ſceptics of this moſt enlightened age,"---they would almoſt tempt one to expreſs himſelf in the ſtyle of miſanthrophy, and ſay, "Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur."

Every doctrine is dangerous that tends to diſcredit the evidence of our ſenſes, external or internal, and to ſubvert the original inſtinctive principles of human belief. In this reſpect the moſt unnatural and incomprehenſible abſurdities, ſuch as the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of matter, and of perceptions without a percipient, are far from being harmleſs; as they ſeem to lead, and actually have led, to univerſal ſcepticiſm; and ſet an example of a method of reaſoning ſufficient to overturn all truth, and pervert every human faculty. In this reſpect alſo we have proved the doctrine of fatality to be of moſt perni-

pernicious tendency, as it leads men to ſuppoſe their moral ſentiments fallacious or equivocal; not to mention its influence on our notions of God, and natural religion. When a ſceptic attacks one principle of common ſenſe, he does in effect attack all; for if we are made diſtruſtful of the veracity of inſtinctive conviction in one inſtance, we muſt, or at leaſt we may, become equally diſtruſtful in every other. A little ſcepticiſm introduced into ſcience will ſoon aſſimilate the whole to its own nature; the fatal fermentation, once begun, ſpreads wider and wider every moment, till all the maſs be transformed into rottenneſs and poiſon.

There is no exaggeration here. The preſent ſtate of the abſtract ſciences is a melancholy proof, that what I ſay is true. This is called the age of reaſon and philoſophy; and this is the age of avowed and dogmatical atheiſm. Sceptics have at laſt grown weary of doubting; and have now diſcovered, by the force of their *great talents*, that one thing at leaſt is certain, namely, that God, and religion, and immortality, are empty ſounds. This is the final triumph of our ſo much boaſted philoſophic ſpirit; theſe are the limits of the dominion of error, beyond which we can hardly conceive it poſſible for human ſophiſtry to penetrate. Exult, O Metaphyſic,

taphyſic, at the conſummation of thy glories. More thou canſt not hope, more thou canſt not deſire. Fall down, ye mortals, and acknowledge the ſtupendous bleſſing: adore thoſe men of *great talents*, thoſe daring ſpirits, thoſe patterns of modeſty, gentleneſs, and candour, thoſe prodigies of genius, thoſe heroes in beneficence, who have thus laboured---to ſtrip you of every rational conſolation, and to make your condition ten thouſand times worſe than that of the beaſts that periſh.

Why can I not expreſs myſelf with leſs warmth! Why can I not deviſe an apology for theſe philoſophers, to ſcreen them from this dreadful imputation of being the enemies and plagues of mankind!---Perhaps they do not themſelves believe their own tenets, but publiſh them only as the means of getting a name and a fortune. But I hope this is not the caſe; God forbid that it ſhould! for then the enormity of their guilt would ſurpaſs all power of language; we could only gaze at it, and tremble. Compared with ſuch wickedneſs, the crimes of the thief, the robber, the incendiary, would almoſt diſappear. Theſe ſacrifice the fortunes or the lives of ſome of their fellow-creatures, to their own neceſſity or outrageous appetite: but thoſe would run the hazard of ſacrificing, to their own avarice

rice or vanity, the happineſs of all mankind, both here and hereafter. No; I cannot ſuppoſe it: the heart of man, however depraved, is not capable of ſuch infernal malignity.—Perhaps they do not foreſee the conſequences of their doctrines. BERKELEY moſt certainly did not.——But BERKELEY did not attack the religion of his country, did not ſeek to undermine the foundations of virtue, did not preach or recommend Atheiſm. He erred; and who is free from error? but his intentions were irreproachable; and his conduct as a man, and a Chriſtian, did honour to human nature.—Perhaps our modern ſceptics are ignorant, that, without the belief of a God, and the hope of immortality, the miſeries of human life would often be inſupportable. But can I ſuppoſe them in a ſtate of total and invincible ſtupidity, utter ſtrangers to the human heart, and to human affairs! Sure they would not thank me for ſuch a ſuppoſition. Yet this I muſt ſuppoſe, or I muſt believe them to be the moſt cruel, the moſt perfidious, and the moſt profligate of men.

Careſſed by thoſe who call themſelves the great, ingroſſed by the formalities and fopperies of life, intoxicated with vanity, pampered with adulation, diſſipated in the tumult of buſineſs, or amidſt the viciſſitudes of folly,

folly, they perhaps have little need, and little reliſh, for the conſolations of religion. But let them know, that, in the ſolitary ſcenes of life, there is many an honeſt and tender heart pining with incurable anguiſh, pierced with the ſharpeſt ſting of diſappointment, bereſt of friends, chilled with poverty, racked with diſeaſe, ſcourged by the oppreſſor; whom nothing but truſt in Providence, and the hope of a future retribution, could preſerve from the agonies of deſpair. And do they, with ſacrilegious hands, attempt to violate this laſt refuge of the miſerable, and to rob them of the only comfort that had ſurvived the ravages of misfortune, malice, and tyranny! Did it ever happen, that the influence of their execrable tenets diſturbed the tranquillity of virtuous retirement, deepened the gloom of human diſtreſs, or aggravated the horrors of the grave? Is it poſſible, that this may have happened in many inſtances? Is it probable, that this hath happened, or may happen, in one ſingle inſtance? — Ye traitors to human kind, ye murderers of the human ſoul, how can ye anſwer for it to your own hearts! Surely every ſpark of your generoſity is extinguiſhed for ever, if this conſideration do not awaken in you the keeneſt remorſe, and make you wiſh in bitterneſs of ſoul——But I remonſtrate in vain. All this

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muſt have often occurred to you, and been as often rejected as utterly frivolous. Could I inforce the preſent topic by an appeal to your vanity, I might poſſibly make ſome impreſſion: but to plead with you on the principles of benevolence or generoſity, is to addreſs you in language ye do not, or will not, underſtand; and as to the ſhame of being convicted of abſurdity, ignorance, and want of candour, ye have long ago proved yourſelves ſuperior to the ſenſe of it.

But let not the lovers of truth be diſcouraged. Atheiſm cannot be of long continuance, nor is there much danger of its becoming univerſal. The influence of ſome conſpicuous characters has brought it too much into faſhion; which, in a thoughtleſs and profligate age, it is no difficult matter to accompliſh. But when men have retrieved the powers of ſerious reflection, they will find it a frightful phantom; and the mind will return gladly and eagerly to its old endearments. One thing we certainly know: the faſhion of ſceptical and metaphyſical ſyſtems ſoon paſſeth away. Thoſe unnatural productions, the vile effuſion of a hard and ſtupid heart, that miſtakes its own reſtleſsneſs for the activity of genius, and its own captiouſneſs for ſagacity of underſtanding, may, like other monſters, pleaſe a while by

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their ſingularity; but the charm is ſoon over: and the ſucceeding age will be aſtoniſhed to hear, that their forefathers were deluded, or amuſed, with ſuch fooleries. The meaſure of ſcepticiſm ſeems indeed to be full; it is time for truth to vindicate her rights, and we truſt they ſhall yet be completely vindicated. Such are the hopes and the earneſt wiſhes of one, who has ſeldom made controverſy his ſtudy, who never took pleaſure in argumentation, and who diſclaims all ambition of being reputed a ſubtle diſputant; but who, as a friend to human nature, would account it his honour to be inſtrumental in promoting, though by means unpleaſant to himſelf, the cauſe of virtue and true ſcience, and in bringing to contempt that ſceptical ſophiſtry which is equally ſubverſive of both.

POSTSCRIPT.

November, 1770.

TO read and criticiſe the modern ſyſtems of ſcepticiſm, is ſo diſagreeable a taſk, that nothing but a regard to duty could ever have determined me to engage in it. I found in them neither inſtruction nor amuſement; I wrote againſt them with all the diſguſt that one feels in wrangling with an unreaſonable adverſary; and I publiſhed what I had written, with the certain proſpect of raiſing many enemies, and with ſuch an opinion of my performance, as allowed me not to entertain any ſanguine hope of ſucceſs. I thought it however poſſible, nay, and probable too, that this book might do good. I knew that it contained ſome matters of importance, which, if I was not able to ſet them in the beſt light, might however, by my means, be ſuggeſted to others more capable to do them juſtice.

Since theſe papers were firſt publiſhed, I have laid myſelf out to obtain information of what has been ſaid of them, both by their friends, and by their enemies; hoping to profit by the cenſures of the latter, as well as by the admonitions of the former. I do

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not hear, that any perſon has accuſed me of miſconceiving or miſrepreſenting my adverſaries doctrine. Again and again have I requeſted it of thoſe whom I know to be maſters of the whole controverſy, to give me their thoughts freely on this point; and they have repeatedly told me, that, in their judgment, nothing of this kind can be laid to my charge.

Moſt of the objections that have been made I had forſeen, and, as I thought, ſufficiently obviated by occaſional remarks in the courſe of the eſſay. But, in regard to ſome of them, I find it neceſſary now to be more particular. I wiſh to give the fulleſt ſatisfaction to every candid mind: and I am ſure I do not, on theſe ſubjects, entertain a ſingle thought which I need to be aſhamed or afraid to lay before the public.

I have been much blamed * for entering ſo warmly into this controverſy. In order to prepoſſeſs the minds of thoſe who had not read this performance, with an unfavourable opinion

* In juſtice to the public I muſt here obſerve, that the clamour againſt me on account of this book, however loud and alarming at firſt, appears now to have been raiſed and propagated by *a few perſons of a particular party in* SCOTLAND; and to have owed its riſe to prejudice, and its progreſs to defamation; two engines of malignity, which an honeſt man would be much more ſorry to ſee employed for him than againſt him.

opinion of it, and of its author, inſinuations have been made, and carefully helped about, that it treats only of ſome abſtruſe points of ſpeculative metaphyſics; which, however, I am accuſed of having diſcuſſed, or attempted to diſcuſs, with all the zeal of the moſt furious bigot, indulging myſelf in an indecent vehemence of language, and uttering the moſt rancorous invectives againſt thoſe who differ from me in opinion. Much, on this occaſion, has been ſaid in praiſe of moderation and ſcepticiſm; moderation, the ſource of candour, good-breeding, and good-nature; and ſcepticiſm, the child of impartiality, and the parent of humility. When men believe with full conviction, nothing, it ſeems, is to be expected from them but bigotry and bitterneſs: when they ſuffer themſelves in their inquiries to be biaſſed by partiality, or warmed with affection, they are philoſophers no longer, but revilers and enthuſiaſts!—If this were a juſt account of the matter and manner of *the Eſſay on Truth*, I ſhould not have the face even to attempt an apology; for were any perſon guilty of the fault here complained of, I myſelf ſhould certainly be one of the firſt to condemn him.

In the whole circle of human ſciences, real or pretended, there is not any thing to be found which I think more perfectly contemptible,

temptible, than the ſpeculative metaphyſics of the moderns. It is indeed a moſt wretched medley of ill-digeſted notions, indiſtinct perceptions, inaccurate obſervations, perverted language, and ſophiſtical argument; diſtinguiſhing where there is no difference, and confounding where there is no ſimilitude; feigning difficulties where it cannot find them, and overlooking them when real. I know no end that the ſtudy of ſuch jargon can anſwer, except to harden and ſtupify the heart, bewilder the underſtanding, ſour the temper, and habituate the mind to irreſolution, captiouſneſs, and falſehood. For ſtudies of this ſort I have neither time nor inclination, I have neither head nor heart. To enter into them at all, is fooliſh; to enter into them with warmth, ridiculous; but to treat thoſe with any bitterneſs, whoſe judgments concerning them may differ from ours, is in a very high degree odious and criminal. Thus far, then, my adverſaries and I are agreed. Had the ſceptical philoſophers confined themſelves to thoſe inoffenſive wranglings that ſhow only the ſubtlety and captiouſneſs of the diſputant, but affect not the principles of human conduct, they never would have found an opponent in me. My paſſion for writing is not ſtrong; and my love of controverſy ſo weak, that, if it could always be avoided

avoided with a ſafe conſcience, I would never engage in it at all. But when doctrines are publiſhed ſubverſive of morality and religion; doctrines, of which I perceive and have it in my power to expoſe the abſurdity, my duty to the public forbids me to be ſilent; eſpecially when I ſee, that, by the influence of faſhion, folly, or more criminal cauſes, thoſe doctrines ſpread wider and wider every day, diffuſing ignorance, miſery, and licentiouſneſs, where-ever they prevail. Let us oppoſe the torrent, though we ſhould not be able to check it. The zeal and example of the weak have often rouſed to action, and to victory, the ſlumbering virtue of the ſtrong.

I likewiſe agree with my adverſaries in this, that ſcepticiſm, where it tends to make men well-bred and good-natured, and to rid them of pedantry and petulance, without doing individuals or ſociety any harm, is an excellent thing. And ſome ſorts of ſcepticiſm there are, that really have this tendency. In philoſophy, in hiſtory, in politics, yea, and even in theology itſelf, there are many points of doubtful diſputation, in regard to which a man's judgment may lean to either of the ſides, or hang wavering between them, without the leaſt inconvenience to himſelf, or others. Whether pure ſpace exiſts, or how

we come to form an idea of it; whether all the objects of human reason may be fairly reduced to Aristotle's ten categories; whether Hannibal, when he passed the Alps, had any vinegar in his camp; whether Richard III. was as remarkable for cruelty and a hump-back, as is commonly believed; whether Mary Queen of Scotland married Bothwell from inclination, or from the necessity of her affairs; whether the earth is better peopled now than it was in ancient times; whether public prayers should be recited from memory, or read:—in regard to these, and such like questions, a little scepticism may be very safe and very proper, and I will never think the worse of a man for differing from me in opinion. And if ever it should be my chance to engage in controversy on such questions, I here *pledge myself to the public*, (absit invidia verbo!), that I will conduct the whole affair with the most exemplary coolness of blood, and lenity of language. I have always observed, that strong conviction is much more apt to breed strife, in matters of little moment, than in subjects of high importance. Not to mention (what I would willingly forget) the scandalous contests that have prevailed in the Christian world about trifling

trifling ceremonies and points of doctrine, I need only put the reader in mind of thoſe learned critics and annotators, Salmaſius, Valla, and Scaliger, who, in their ſquabbles about words, gave ſcope to ſuch rancorous animoſity and virulent abuſe, as is altogether without example. In every caſe, where dogmatical belief tends to harden the heart, or to breed prejudices incompatible with candour, humanity, and the love of truth, all good men will be careful to cultivate moderation and diffidence.

But there are other points, in regard to which a ſtrong conviction produces the beſt effects, and doubt and heſitation the worſt: and theſe are the points that our ſceptics labour to ſubvert, and I to eſtabliſh. That the human ſoul is a real and permament ſubſtance, that God is infinitely wiſe and good, that virtue and vice are eſſentially different, that there is ſuch a thing as truth, and that man in many caſes is capable of diſcovering it, are ſome of the principles which this book is intended to vindicate from the objections of ſcepticiſm. Attempts have been made to perſuade us, that there is no evidence of truth in any ſcience; that the human underſtanding ought not to believe any thing, but rather to remain in perpetual ſuſ-

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pence between oppoſite opinions; that it is unreaſonable to believe the Deity to be perfectly wiſe and good, or even to exiſt; that the ſoul of man has nothing permanent in its nature, nor indeed any kind of exiſtence diſtinct from its preſent perceptions, which are continually changing, and will ſoon be at an end; and that moral diſtinctions are ambiguous and artificial, depending rather on human caprice and faſhion, than on the nature of things, or the divine will. This ſcepticiſm the reader will obſerve, is totally ſubverſive of ſcience, morality, and religion, both natural and revealed. And this is the ſcepticiſm which I am blamed for having oppoſed with warmth and earneſtneſs.

I deſire to know, what good effects this ſcepticiſm is likely to produce? "It humbles" we are told, "our pride of understanding." Indeed! And are they to be conſidered as patterns of humility, who ſet the wiſdom of all former ages at nought, bid defiance to the common ſenſe of mankind, and ſay to the wiſeſt and beſt men that ever did honour to our nature, Ye are fools or hypocrites; we only are candid, honeſt and ſagacious! Is this humility! Should I be humble, if I were to ſpeak and act in this manner! Every man of ſenſe would pro-

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nounce me loſt to all ſhame, an apoſtate from truth and virtue, an enemy to human kind; and my own conſcience would juſtify the cenſure.

And ſo, it ſeems that pride of underſtanding is inſeparable from the diſpoſition of thoſe who believe, that they have a ſoul, that there is a God, that virtue and vice are eſſentially different, and that men are in ſome caſes permitted to diſcern the difference between truth and falſehood! Yet the goſpel requires or ſuppoſes the belief of all theſe points; the goſpel alſo commands us to be humble: and the ſpirit and influence of the goſpel have produced the moſt perfect examples of that virtue that ever appeared among men. A believer may be proud: but it is neither his belief, nor what he believes, that can make him ſo; for both ought to teach him humility. To call in queſtion, and labour to ſubvert, thoſe firſt principles of ſcience, morality and religion, which all the rational part of mankind acknowledge, is indeed an indication of a proud and preſumptuous underſtanding: but does the ſceptic lay this to the charge of the believer? I have heard of a thief, when cloſe purſued, turning on his purſuers, and charging them with robbery: but I do not think

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the example worthy a philoſopher's imitation.

The prevention of bigotry is ſaid to be another of the bleſſed effects of this modern ſcepticiſm. And indeed, if ſceptics would act conſiſtently with their own principles, there would be ground for the remark: for a man who believes nothing at all, cannot be ſaid to be blindly attached to any opinion, except perhaps to this one, that nothing is to be believed; in which, however, if he have any regard to uniformity of character, he will take care not to be dogmatical. But it is well known to all who have had any opportunity of obſerving his conduct, that the ſceptic rejects thoſe opinions only which the reſt of mankind admit: for that, in adhering to his own paradoxes, the moſt devoted anchorite, the moſt furious inquiſitor, is not a greater bigot than he. An ingenious author has therefore, with very good reaſon, made it one of the articles of the Infidel's creed, That, "he believes in all unbelief *." Though a late writer is a perfect ſceptic in regard to the exiſtence of his ſoul and body, he is certain, that men have no idea of power: though he has many doubts and difficulties about

* Connoiſſeur, No. 9.

about the evidence of mathematical truth, he is quite poſitive that his ſoul is not the ſame thing to day it was yeſterday; and though he affirms that it is by an act of the human underſtanding, that two and two have come to be equal to four, yet he cannot allow, that to ſteal or to abſtain from ſtealing, to act or to ceaſe from action, is in the power of any man. In reading ſceptical books, I have often found, that the ſtrength of the author's attachment to his paradox, is in proportion to its abſurdity. If it deviates but a little from common opinion, he gives himſelf but little trouble about it; if it be inconſiſtent with univerſal belief, he condeſcends to argue the matter, and to bring what with him paſſes for a proof of it; if it be ſuch as no man ever did or could believe, he is ſtill more conceited of his proof, and calls it a demonſtration; but if it is inconceivable, it is a wonder if he does not take it for granted. Thus, that our idea of extenſion is extended, is inconceivable, and in the *Treatiſe of Human Nature* is taken for granted: that matter exiſts only in the mind that perceives it, is what no man ever did or could believe; and the author of the *Treatiſe concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, has favoured the world with what paſſes among the faſhionable metaphyſicians for a demonſtration of it:

it: that moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are all upon the ſame footing, is inconſiſtent with univerſal belief; and a famous Eſſayiſt has agued the matter at large, and would fain perſuade us, that he has proved it; though I do not recollect, that he triumphs in this proof as ſo perfectly irreſiſtible, as thoſe by which he conceives himſelf to have annihilated the idea of power, and exploded the exiſtence and permanency of percipient ſubſtances. I will not ſay, however, that this gradation holds univerſally. Sceptics, it muſt be owned, bear a right zealous attachment to all their abſurdities, both greater and leſs. If they are moſt warmly intereſted in behalf of the former, it is, I ſuppoſe, becauſe they have had the ſagacity to foreſee, that thoſe would ſtand moſt in need of their countenance and protection.

We ſee now how far ſcepticiſm may be ſaid to prevent bigotry. It prevents all bigotry, and all ſtrong attachment on the ſide of truth and common ſenſe; but in behalf of its own paradoxes, it eſtabliſhes bigotry the moſt implicit and the moſt obſtinate. It is true, that ſceptics ſometimes tell us, that, however poſitively they may aſſert their doctrines, they would not have us think them poſitive aſſertors of any doctrine. Sextus Empiricus has done this; and ſome too, if I miſ-

miſtake not, of our modern Pyrrhoniſts. But common readers are not capable of ſuch exquiſite refinement, as to believe their author to be in earneſt, and at the ſame time not in earneſt; as to believe, that when he aſſerts ſome points with diffidence, and others with the utmoſt confidence, he holds himſelf to be equally diffident of all.

There is but one way in which it is poſſible for a ſceptic to ſatisfy us, that he is equally doubtful of all doctrines. He muſt aſſert nothing, lay down no principles, contradict none of the opinions of other people, and advance none of his own: in a word, he muſt confine his doubts to his own breaſt, at leaſt the grounds of his doubts; or propoſe them modeſtly and privately, not with a view to make us change our mind, but only to ſhew his own diffidence. For from the moment that he attempts to obtrude them on the public, or on any individual, or even to repreſent the opinions of others as leſs probable than his own, he commences a dogmatiſt; and is to be accounted more or leſs preſumptuous, according as his doctrine is more or leſs repugnant to common ſenſe, and himſelf more or leſs induſtrious to recommend it.

Though he were to content himſelf with urging objections, without ſeeking to lay down any principle of his own, which however

ever is a degree of moderation that no ſceptic ever yet arrived at, we would not on that account pronounce him an inoffenſive man. If his objections have ever weakened the moral or religious belief of any one perſon, he has injured that perſon in his deareſt and moſt important concerns. They who know the value of true religion, and have had any opportunity of obſerving its effects on themſelves or others, need not be told, how dreadful to a ſenſible mind it is, to be ſtaggered in its faith by the cavils of the infidel. Every perſon of common humanity, who knows any thing of the heart of man, would ſhudder at the thought of infuſing ſcepticiſm into the pious Chriſtian. Suppoſe the Chriſtian to retain his faith in ſpite of all objections; yet the confutation of theſe cannot fail to diſtreſs him; and a habit of doubting, once begun, may, to the lateſt hour of his life, prove fatal to his peace of mind. Let no one miſtake or miſrepreſent me: I am not ſpeaking of thoſe points of doctrine which rational believers allow to be indifferent: I ſpeak of thoſe great and moſt eſſential articles of faith; the exiſtence of a Deity, infinitely wiſe, beneficent, and powerful; the certainty of a future ſtate of retribution; and the divine authority of the goſpel. Theſe are the articles which ſome late authors labour with all their

their might to overturn; and theſe are the articles which every perſon who loves virtue and mankind, would wiſh to ſee ardently and zealouſly defended. Is it bigotry to believe theſe ſublime truths with full aſſurance of faith? I glory in ſuch bigotry: I would not part with it for a thouſand worlds: I congratulate the man who is poſſeſſed of it; for, amidſt all the viciſſitudes and calamities of the preſent ſtate, that man enjoys an inexhauſtible fund of conſolation, of which it is not in the power of fortune to deprive him. Calamities, did I ſay? The evils of a very ſhort life will not be accounted ſuch by him who has a near and certain proſpect of a happy eternity.—Will it be ſaid, that the firm belief of theſe divine truths did ever give riſe to ill-nature or perſecution? It will not be ſaid, by any perſon who is at all acquainted with hiſtory, or the human mind. Of ſuch belief, when ſincere, and undebaſed by criminal paſſions, meekneſs, benevolence, and forgiveneſs, are the natural and neceſſary effects. There is not a book on earth ſo favourable to all the kind, and all the ſublime affections, or ſo unfriendly to hatred and perſecution, to tyranny, injuſtice, and every ſort of malevolence, as that very goſpel againſt which our ſceptics entertain ſuch a rancorous antipathy. Of this they cannot be ignorant,

norant, if they have ever read it; for it breathes nothing throughout, but mercy, benevolence, and peace. If they have not read it, they and their prejudices are as far below our contempt, as any thing ſo hateful can be: if they have, their pretended concern for the rights of mankind is all hypocriſy and a lie. Nor need they attempt to frame an anſwer to this accuſation, till they have proved, that the morality of the goſpel is faulty or imperfect: that virtue is not uſeful to individuals, nor beneficial to ſociety; that the evils of life are moſt effectually alleviated by the extinction of all hope; that annihilation is a much more encouraging proſpect to virtue, than the certain view of eternal happineſs; that nothing is a greater check to vice, than a firm perſuaſion that no puniſhment awaits it; and that it is a conſideration full of miſery to a good man, when weeping on the grave of a beloved friend, to reflect, that they ſhall ſoon meet again in a better ſtate, never to part any more. Till the teachers and abettors of infidelity have proved theſe points, or renounced their pretenſions to univerſal patriotiſm, their character is polluted with all the infamy that can be implied in the appellation of *liar* and *hypocrite*.

I wonder at thoſe men who charge upon Chriſtianity all the evils that ſuperſtition, avarice,

avarice, ſenſuality, and the love of power, have introduced into the Chriſtian world; and then ſuppoſe, that theſe evils are to be prevented, not by ſuppreſſing criminal paſſions, but by extirpating Chriſtianity, or weakening its influence. In fact, our religion ſupplies the only effectual means of ſuppreſſing theſe paſſions, and ſo preventing the miſchief complained of; and this it will ever be more or leſs powerful to accompliſh, according as its influence over the minds of men is greater or leſs; and greater or leſs will its influence be, according as its doctrines are more or leſs firmly believed. It was not, becauſe they were Chriſtians, but becauſe they choſe to be the avaricious and blood-thirſty ſlaves of an avaricious and blood-thirſty tyrant, that Cortez and Pizarro perpetrated thoſe diabolical cruelties in Peru and Mexico, the narrative of which is inſupportable to humanity. Had they been Chriſtians in any thing but in name, they would have loved their neighbour as themſelves; and no man who loves his neighbour as himſelf, will ever cut his throat, or roaſt him alive, in order to get at his money.

If zeal be warrantable on any occaſion, it muſt be ſo in the preſent controverſy: for I know of no doctrines more important in themſelves, or more affecting to a ſenſible mind,

mind, than thoſe which the ſcepticiſm confuted in this book tends to ſubvert. But why, it may be ſaid, ſhould zeal be warrantable on any occaſion? The anſwer is eaſy: Becauſe on ſome occaſions it is decent and natural. When a man is deeply intereſted in his ſubject, it is not natural for him to keep up the appearance of as much coolneſs, as if he were diſputing about an indifferent matter: and whatever is not natural is always offenſive. Were he to hear his deareſt friends branded with the appellation of knaves and ruffians, would it be natural, would it be decent, for him to preſerve the ſame indifference in his look, and ſoftneſs in his manner, as if he were inveſtigating a truth in conic ſections, arguing about the cauſe of the Aurora Borealis, or ſettling a point of ancient hiſtory? Ought he not to ſhow, by the ſharpneſs as well as by the ſolidity of his reply, that he not only diſavows, but deteſts the accuſation? Is there a man whoſe indignation would not kindle at ſuch an inſult? Is there a man who would be ſo much overawed by any antagoniſt, as to conceal his indignation? Of ſuch a man I ſhall only ſay, that I would not chuſe him for my friend. When our ſubject lies near our heart our language muſt be animated, or it will be worſe than lifeleſs; it will be affected and hypo-

hypocritical. Now what ſubject can lie nearer the heart of a Chriſtian, or of a man, than the exiſtence and perfections of God, and the immortality of the human ſoul? If he can not, if he ought not, to hear with patience the blaſphemies belched by unthinking profligates in their common converſation, with what temper of mind will he liſten or reply to the cool, inſidious, and envenomed impieties of the deliberate athieſt!—Fy on it! that I ſhould need to write ſo long an apology for being an enemy to atheiſm and nonſenſe!

" But why engage in the controverſy at " all? Let the infidel do his worſt, and heap " ſophiſm on ſophiſm, and rail, and blaſ- " pheme as long as he pleaſes; if your reli- " gion be from God, or founded in reaſon, " it cannot be overthrown. Why then give " yourſelf or others any trouble with your " attempts to ſupport a cauſe, againſt which " it is ſaid that hell itſelf ſhall not prevail?" —This objection has been made, and urged too with confidence. It has juſt as much weight as the following. Why enact laws againſt, or inflict puniſhment upon murderers? Let them do their worſt, and ſtab, and ſtrangle, and poiſon, as much as they pleaſe, they will never be able to accompliſh the final extermination of the human ſpecies, nor

perhaps

perhaps to depopulate a ſingle province.—Such idle talk deſerves no anſwer, or but a very ſhort one. We do believe, and therefore we rejoice, that our religion ſhall flouriſh in ſpite of all the ſophiſtry of malevolent men. But is their ſophiſtry the leſs wicked on that account? Does it not deſerve to be puniſhed with ridicule and confutation? Have we reaſon to hope, that a miracle will be wrought to ſave any individual from infidelity, or even any believer from thoſe doubts and apprehenſions which the writings of infidels are intended to raiſe? And is it not worth our while, is it not our duty, ought it not to be our inclination, to endeavour to prevent ſuch a calamity? Nor let us imagine that this is the buſineſs of the clergy alone. They, no doubt are beſt qualified for this ſervice; but we of the laity who believe the goſpel, are under the ſame obligation to wiſh well, and, according to our ability, to do good to our fellow-creatures. For my own part, tho' the writing of this book had been a work of much greater difficulty and labour than I found it to be, I would have chearfully undertaken it, in the hope of being inſtrumental in reclaiming even a ſingle ſceptic from his unhappy prejudices, or in preſerving even a ſingle believer from the horrors of ſcepticiſm. Tell me not, that thoſe horrors

horrors have no exiſtence. I know the contrary. Tell me not, that the good ends propoſed can never in any degree be accompliſhed by performances of this kind. Of this too I know the contrary.

Suppoſe a ſet of men, ſubjects of the Britiſh government, to publiſh books ſetting forth, That liberty, both civil and religious, is an abſurdity; that trial by juries, the *Habeas corpus* act, magna charta, and the Proteſtant religion, are intolerable nuiſances; and that Popery, deſpotiſm, and the inquiſition, ought immediately to be eſtabliſhed throughout the whole Britiſh empire; ſuppoſe them to exhort their countrymen to overturn, or at leaſt to diſregard, our excellent laws and conſtitution, and make a tender of their ſouls and conſciences to the Pope, and of their lives and fortunes to the Grand Seignior;—and ſuppoſe them to write ſo cautiouſly as to eſcape the cenſure of the law, and yet with plauſibility ſufficient to ſeduce many, and give riſe to much diſſatisfaction, diſcord, and licentious practice, equally fatal to the happineſs of individuals and to the public peace:—With what temper would an Engliſhman of ſenſe and ſpirit ſet about confuting their principles? Would it be decent, or even pardonable, to handle ſuch a ſubject with coolneſs, or to behave with

complaiſance towards ſuch adverſaries? Suppoſe them to have ſpecious qualities, and to paſs with their own party for men of candour, genius, and learning: yet the lover of liberty and mankind would not, I preſume, be diſpoſed to pay them any exceſſive compliments on that account, or on any other. But ſuppoſe theſe political apoſtates to appear, in the courſe of the controverſy, chargeable with ignorance and ſophiſtical reaſoning, with evaſive and quibbling refinements, with miſrepreſentation of common facts, and miſapprehenſion of common language, more attached to hypotheſis than to the truth, preferring their own conceits to the common ſenſe of mankind, and ſeeking to gratify their own exorbitant vanity and luſt of paradox, though at the expence of the happineſs of millions:—with what face could their moſt abject flatterers, and moſt implicit admirers, complain of the ſeverity of that antagoniſt who ſhould treat both them and their principles with contempt and indignation? with what face urge in their defence, that, though perhaps ſomewhat blameable on the preſent occaſion, they and their works were notwithſtanding intitled to univerſal eſteem, and the moſt reſpectful uſage on account of their ſkill in muſic, architecture, geometry, and the Greek and Latin tongues! On this account, would they be in any leſs degree the peſts of ſociety,

or

or the enemies of mankind? would their falſe reaſoning be leſs ſophiſtical, their preſumption leſs arrogant, or their malevolence leſs atrocious? Do not the men who, like Alexander, Machiavel, and the author of La Pucelle d'Orleans, employ their great talents in deſtroying and corrupting mankind, aggravate all their other crimes by the dreadful addition of ingratitude and breach of truſt? And are not their characters, for this very reaſon, the more obnoxious to univerſal abhorrence? An illiterate blockhead in the Robinhood tavern, blaſpheming the Saviour of mankind, or labouring to confound the diſtinctions of vice and virtue, is a wicked wretch, no doubt: but his wickedneſs admits of ſome ſhadow of excuſe; he might plead his ignorance, his ſtupidity, and the ſtill more profligate lives and principles of thoſe whom the world, by a prepoſterous figure of ſpeech, is pleaſed to call his betters: but the men of parts and learning, who join in the ſame infernal cry, are criminals of a much higher order; for in their defence nothing can be pleaded that will not aggravate their guilt.

My deſign in this book was, to give others the very ſame notions of the ſceptical philoſophy that I myſelf entertain; which I could not poſſibly have done, if I had not taken

taken the liberty to deliver my thoughts plainly and without reſerve. And truly I ſaw no reaſon for being more indulgent to the writings of ſceptics, than to thoſe of other men. The taſte of the public requires not any ſuch extraordinary condeſcenſion. If ever it ſhould, which is not probable, we may then think it prudent to comply; but, as we ſcorn, in matters of ſuch moment, to expreſs ourſelves by halves, we will then alſo throw pen and ink aſide, never to be reſumed until we again find, that we may with ſafety write, and be honeſt at the ſame time.

Infidels take it upon them to treat religion and its friends with opprobrious language, miſrepreſentation, undeſerved ridicule, and divers other ſorts of abuſe. Some of them aſſert, with the moſt dogmatical aſſurance, what they know to be contrary to the common ſenſe of mankind. All this paſſes for wit, and eloquence, and liberal inquiry, and a manly ſpirit. But whenever the friends of truth eſpouſe, with warmth, that cauſe which they know to be agreeable to common ſenſe and univerſal opinion, this is called *bigotry*: and whenever the Chriſtian vindicates, with earneſtneſs, thoſe principles which he believes to be of the higheſt importance, and which he knows to be eſſential to the happineſs of man, immediately he is charged with

want

want of moderation, want of temper, enthuſiaſm, and the ſpirit of perſecution. Far be it from the lover of truth to imitate thoſe authors in miſrepreſentation, or in endeavouring to expoſe their adverſaries to unmerited ridicule. But if a man were to obtain a patent for vending poiſon, it would be very hard to deny his neighbour the priviledge of ſelling the antidote. If their zeal in ſpreading and recommending their doctrines be ſuffered to paſs without cenſure, our zeal in vindicating ours has at leaſt as good a title to paſs uncenſured. If this is not allowed, I muſt ſuppoſe, that the preſent race of infidels, like the *jure divino* kings, imagine themſelves inveſted with ſome peculiar ſanctity of character; that whatever they are pleaſed to ſay is to be received as law and the faſhion; and that to contradict their will, or even addreſs them without proſtration, is indecent and criminal. I know not whence it is that they aſſume theſe airs of ſuperiority. Is it from the high rank ſome of them hold in the world of letters? I would have them to know, that it is but a ſhort time ſince that high rank was either yielded to, or claimed by, ſuch perſons. Spinoza, Hobbes, Collins, Woolſton, and the reſt of that tribe, were within theſe forty or fifty years accounted a very contemptible brotherhood.

The

The great geniuſes of the laſt age treated them with little ceremony; and would not, I ſuppoſe, were they now alive, pay more reſpect to imitators, copiers, and plagiaries, than they did to the original authors. If the enemies of our religion would profit by experience, they might learn, from the fate of ſome of their moſt renowned brethren, that infidelity, however faſhionable and lucrative, is not the moſt convenient field for a ſucceſsful diſplay of genius. Ever ſince Voltaire, ſtimulated by avarice, and other dotages incident to unprincipled old age, formed the ſcheme of turning a penny by writing three or four volumes yearly againſt the Chriſtian religion, he has dwindled from a genius of no common magnitude into a paltry book-maker; and now thinks he does great and terrible things, by retailing the crude and long exploded notions of the free-thinkers of the laſt age, which, when ſeaſoned with a few miſtakes, miſrepreſentations, and ribaldries, of his own, form ſuch a meſs of falſehood, impiety, obſcenity, and other abominable ingredients, as nothing but the monſtrous maw of an illiterate infidel can either digeſt or endure. Several of our famous ſceptics have lived to ſee the greateſt part of their profane tenets confuted. I hope, and earneſtly wiſh, that they may live to make a

full

full recantation. Some of them muſt have known, and many of them might have known, that there tenets were confuted before they adopted them: yet did they adopt them notwithſtanding, and diſplay them to the world with as much confidence as if nothing had ever been advanced on the other ſide. So have I ſeen a teſty and ſtubborn dogmatiſt, when all his arguments were anſwered, and all his invention exhauſted, comfort himſelf at laſt with ſimply repeating his former poſitions at the end of each new remonſtrance from the adverſary.

They who are converſant in the works of the ſceptical philoſophers, know very well, that thoſe gentlemen do not always maintain that moderation of ſtyle which might be expected from perſons of their profeſſion; and if I thought my conduct in this reſpect needed to be, or could be, juſtified by ſuch a precedent, I might plead even their example as my apology. But I diſclaim every plea that ſuch a precedent could afford me: I write not in the ſpirit of retaliation; and when I find myſelf inclined to be an imitator, I will look out for other models. Indeed it is hardly to be ſuppoſed, that I would take thoſe for my pattern, whoſe talents I deſpiſe, whoſe writings I deteſt, and whoſe principles and projects are ſo directly oppoſite to mine.

Their

Their writings tend to ſubvert the foundations of human knowledge, to poiſon the ſources of human happineſs, and to overturn that religion which the beſt and wiſeſt of men have believed to be of divine original, and which every good man, who underſtands it, muſt reverence as the greateſt bleſſing ever conferred upon the human race. I write with a view to counteract thoſe tendencies, by vindicating ſome fundamental articles of religion and ſcience from the ſceptical objections, and by ſhowing, that no man can attempt to diſprove the firſt principles of knowledge without contradicting himſelf. To the common ſenſe of mankind, they ſcruple not to oppoſe their own conceits, as if they judged theſe to be more worthy of credit than any other authority, human or divine. I urge nothing with any degree of confidence or fervour, in which I have not good reaſon to think myſelf warranted by the common ſenſe of mankind. Does their cauſe, then, or does mine, deſerve the warmeſt attachment? Have they, or have I, the moſt need to guard againſt vehemence of expreſſion*? As certainly as the happineſs of mankind

* "There is no ſatisfying the demands of falſe delicacy," ſays an elegant and pious author, "becauſe they are not "regulated by any fixed ſtandard. But a man of candour "and

mankind is a desirable object, so certainly is my cause good, and theirs evil.

To conclude: Liberty of speech and writing is one of those high privileges that distinguish Great Britain from all other nations. Every good subject wishes, that it may be preserved to the latest posterity; and would be sorry to see the civil power interpose to check the progress of rational inquiry. Nay, when inquiry ceases to be rational, and becomes both whimsical and pernicious, advancing as far as some late authors have carried it, to controvert the first principles of knowledge, morality and religion, and consequently the fundamental laws of the British government, and of all well-regulated society; even then, it must do more hurt than good to oppose it with the arm of flesh. For persecution and punishment for the sake of opinion, seldom fail to strengthen the party they are intended to suppress; and when opinions

" and judgment will allow, that the bashful timidity prac-
" tised by those who put themselves on a level with the adver-
" saries of religion, would ill become one who, declining all
" disputes, asserts primary truths on the authority of common
" sense; and that whoever pleads the cause of religion in this
" way, has a right to assume a firmer tone, and to pronounce
" with a more decisive air, not upon the strength of his own
" judgment, but on the reverence due from all mankind to the
" tribunal to which he appeals."

Oswald's Appeal in behalf of religion, p. 14.

opinions are combated by ſuch weapons only, (which would probably be the caſe if the law were to interpoſe), a ſuſpicion ariſes in the minds of men, that no other weapons are to be had; and therefore that the ſectary, though deſtitute of power, is not wanting in argument. Let opinions then be combated by reaſon, and let ridicule be employed to expoſe nonſenſe. And to keep our licentious authors in awe, and to make it their intereſt to think before they write, to examine facts before they draw inferences, to read books before they criticiſe them, and to ſtudy both ſides of a queſtion before they take it upon them to give judgment, it would not be amiſs, if their vices and follies, as authors, were ſometimes chaſtiſed by a ſatirical ſeverity of expreſſion. This is a proper puniſhment for their fault; this puniſhment they certainly deſerve; and this it is not beneath the dignity of a philoſopher, or divine, or any man who loves God and his fellow-creatures, to inflict. Milton, Locke, Cudworth, Sidney, Tillotſon, and ſeveral of the greateſt and beſt writers of the preſent age, have ſet the example; and have, I doubt not, done good by their nervous and animated expreſſion, as well as by the ſolidity of their arguments. This puniſhment, if inflicted with diſcretion, might teach our licentious authors

authors ſomething of modeſty, and of deference to the judgment of mankind; and, it is to be hoped, would in time bring down that ſpirit of preſumption, and affected ſuperiority, which hath of late diſtinguiſhed their writings, and contributed, more perhaps than all their ſubtlety and ſophiſtry, to the ſeduction of the ignorant, the unwary, and the faſhionable. It is true, the beſt of cauſes may be pleaded with an exceſs of warmth; as when the advocate is ſo blinded by his zeal as to loſe ſight of his argument; or as when, in order to render his adverſaries odious, he alludes to ſuch particulars of their character or private hiſtory as are not to be gathered from their writings. The former fault never fails to injure the cauſe which the writer means to defend: the latter, which is properly termed *perſonal abuſe*, is in itſelf ſo hateful, that every perſon of common prudence would be inclined to avoid it for his own ſake, even though he were not reſtrained by more weighty motives. If an author's writings be ſubverſive of virtue, and dangerous to private happineſs, and the public good, we ought to hold them in deteſtation, and, in order to counteract their baneful tendency, to endeavour to render them deteſtable in the eyes of others; thus far we act the part of honeſt men, and good citizens: but

but with his private hiſtory we have no concern; nor with his character, except in ſo far as he has thought proper to ſubmit it to the public judgment, by diſplaying it in his works. When theſe are of that peculiar ſort, that we cannot expoſe them in their proper colours, without reflecting on his abilities and moral character, we ought by no means to ſacrifice our love of truth and mankind to a complaiſance which, if we are what we pretend to be, and ought to be, would be hypocritical at beſt, as well as mockery of the public, and treachery to our cauſe. The good of ſociety is always to be conſidered as a matter of higher importance than the gratification of an author's vanity. If he does not think of this in time, and take care that the latter be conſiſtent with the former, he has himſelf to blame for all the conſequences. The ſeverity of Collier's attack upon the ſtage, in the end of the laſt century, was, even in the judgment of one * who thought it exceſſive, and who will not be ſuſpected of partiality to that author's doctrine, productive of very good effects; as it obliged the ſucceeding dramatic poets to curb that propenſion to indecency, which had carried ſome of their predeceſſors ſo far beyond the bounds

* Colley Cibber. See his Apology, vol. 1. p. 201.

bounds of good taſte and good manners. If we are not permitted to anſwer the objections of the infidel as plainly, and with as little reſerve, as he makes them, we engage him on unequal terms. And many will be diſpoſed to think moſt favourably of that cauſe, whoſe adherents diſplay the greateſt ardour; and ſome, perhaps, may be tempted to impute to timidity, or to a ſecret diffidence of our principles, what might have been owing to a much more pardonable weakneſs. Nay, if we pay our ſceptical adverſaries their full demand of compliment and adulation; and magnify their genius and virtue, while we confute their atheiſtical and nonſenſical ſophiſms; and ſpeak with as much reſpect of their pitiful conceits and flimſy wranglings, as of the ſublimeſt diſcoveries in philoſophy; is there not reaſon to fear that our writings will do little or no ſervice? For, may not ſome of our readers queſtion our ſincerity? May not many of them continue the admirers and dupes of the authors whom we ſeem ſo paſſionately to admire, and whoſe merit will not appear to them the leſs conſpicuous that it is acknowledged by an avowed antagoniſt? And, laſtly, will not the adverſaries themſelves, more gratified than hurt by ſuch a confutation, becauſe more ambitious of applauſe, than concerned for truth, rejoice in

their

their fancied ſuperiority; and, finding their books become every day more popular and marketable by the conſequence we give them, be encouraged to perſiſt in their malevolent and impious career?

For my own part, though I have always been, and ſhall always be, happy in applauding excellence where-ever I find it; yet neither the pomp of wealth nor the dignity of office, neither the frown of the great nor the ſneer of the faſhionable, neither the ſcioliſt's clamour nor the profligate's reſentment, ſhall ever ſooth or frighten me into an admiration, real or pretended, of impious tenets, ſophiſtical reaſoning, or that paltry metaphyſic with which literature has been ſo diſgraced and peſtered of late years. I am not ſo much addicted to controverſy, as ever to enter into any but what I judge to be of very great importance: and into ſuch controverſy I cannot, I will not, enter with coldneſs and unconcern. If I ſhould, I might pleaſe a party, but I muſt offend the public; I might eſcape the cenſure of thoſe whoſe praiſe I would not value, but I ſhould juſtly forfeit the eſteem of good men, and incur the diſapprobation of my own conſcience.

THE END.

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